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**Occasionally one of our stories will be called an "Off-the-Trail" story, a warning that it is in some way different from the usual magazine stories, perhaps a little different, perhaps a good deal. It may violate a canon of literature or a custom of magazines, or merely be different from the type usually found in this magazine. The difference may lie in unusual theme, material, ending, or manner of telling. No question of relative merit is involved.*

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Three Complete Novelettes

SWAIN had made the crippled *Ingi* lord over the viking warriors of Bergenfjord; and *Ingi's* two brothers, who shared the kingship of Norway with him, plotted to unseat him. And it was in the ensuing conflict that the Jarlmaker earned a new title. "SWAIN KINGSBANE," a complete novelette by Arthur D. Howden Smith, in the next issue.

HE HAD tried everything and failed. He wanted to be an aviator—and couldn't fly a kite if his life depended on it. But he had a "never say die" spirit *and* nerve. "THE INDOMITABLE DUB," by Thomson Burtis, a complete novelette in the next issue, recounts the experiences of an aviator from the ground school to service at the Western Front and back to peacetime flying.

"THEY drove out the Spanish," said *Reynolds*, "drove out the French, and drove out the English; why can't they drive out the Americans?" Captain *"One-Two-Mac"* provided the answer. "HENRI II," a complete novelette by John Webb in the next issue.

Other stories in the next issue are forecast on the last page of this one.

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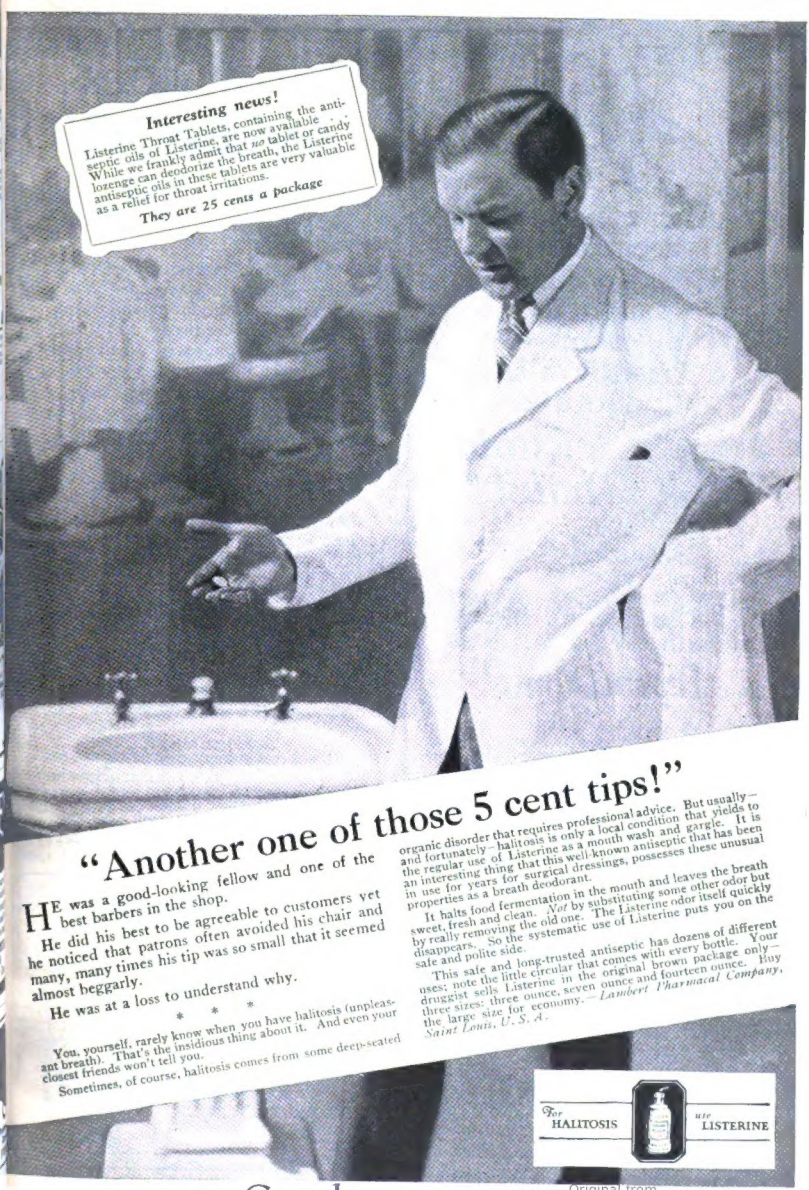
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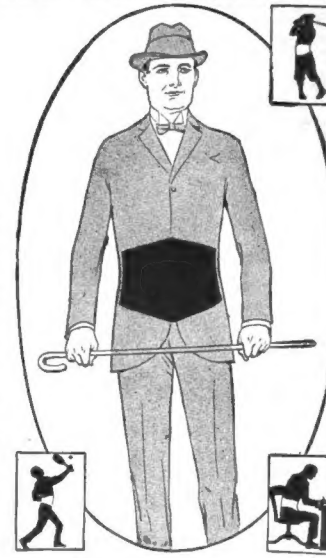

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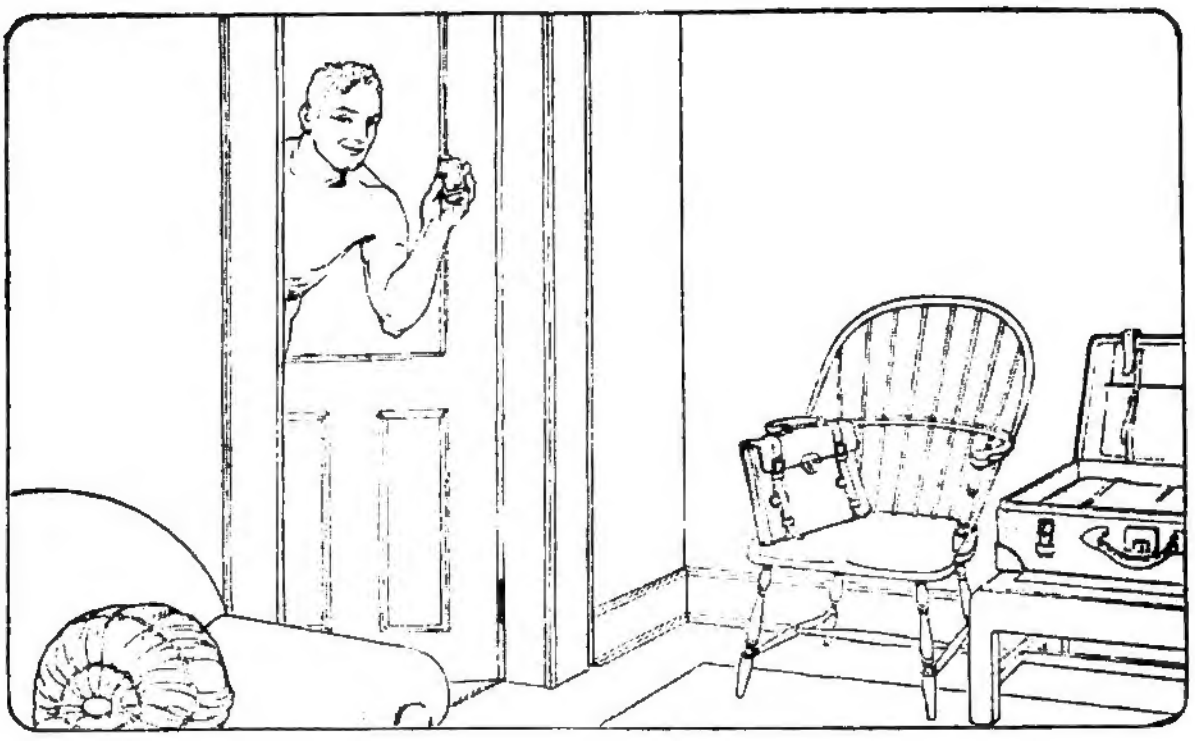
To Knights of the double-rail



In Days of Old, when knights were bold, men left their cosy castle firesides to do battle for the glory of ladies fair, with golden hair.

Men leave home today for approximately similar reasons, but instead of lances and shields, they carry briefcases, conference material and orderbooks.

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Adventure
Sept 20th 1924
Vol. XLVIII No. 5

A HEARTY MEAL

A Complete Novelette

by Leonard H. Nason

Author of "The Fresh Yank," "A Morning Call," etc.

A PLEASANT noon in Spring. There was stamping of feet from within the barrack building as hungry soldiers combed their hair, brushed the dust from their garments, gathered their mess-kits together and prepared to charge out of the door at the blast of the whistle. On the dusty road, on the other side of the high stockade of barbed wire, a negro labor battalion marched singing to its mess shack—

"Ah'm as happy as a bumble-bee,
Fo' Ah doan' bother wuk,
An' wuk doan' bother me."

A soldier rushed out of the barrack door, intent on getting to the wash-house to clean up and get back in time for mess formation. Just outside the angle of the soldier's vision was an officer, manifestly of the ready-made, or mail-order type. He was stoop-shouldered; his hat was around his ears like a fireman's helmet; but he was an officer just the same.

"Here, you!" bellowed the officer.

The soldier came to a sliding stop and sighed heavily when he saw who had called. He knew what was coming. The officer approached and gazed at him sternly, seeking to make the soldier quail as the salesgirls used to quail in the store back home where the officer had been a floor-walker. The soldier only wrinkled his brow patiently and shifted his weight from one foot to the other. His mind was on the nearness of dinner.

"Are you accustomed to salute officers?" inquired he of the overlarge hat.

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"Yes, sir," said the soldier.

"Why didn't you salute me?"

"I didn't see the lootenant, sir."

"Well, you see me now, don't you? Let me see you salute, and be sure you do it properly."

The soldier saluted awkwardly enough, and the officer thereupon gave his victim a little drill in the proper method of rendering the hand salute. The soldier's eye wandered to where his comrades were falling in for mess.

The officer continued his lecture. He traced the source of the salute from the custom of unhelming among the knights of old when in the presence of a superior, to show that they trusted him. This later grew into a simple touch of the head-gear and so on to the chopping motion of the modern salute. The officer did not add that he had learned all this from Moss' Manual for Shorthorns of Infantry, where it is set forth among divers other matters, from the posting of a sentinel, to the issuance of marching orders for a division.

The soldier sighed gently, for his company had marched away, and he knew that he would be late to mess and very probably miss a meal, for the late bird gets no worms in the Army, whatever chance he may have anywhere else.

"Now then," concluded the officer, "I hope you'll profit by this, and don't fail to salute the next officer you see. He may not be as kind-hearted as I am, and he might put you in the guard-house."

The soldier saluted again and betook himself to the mess shack as rapidly as he could, where he made a hearty meal on bread, oleo and coffee, which was all the food there was left.

Most of the men were in the barracks when the soldier who had missed his dinner returned. He sat down on a bunk and gazed sadly out of the window at some men who were tossing a ball back and forth.

"Got a cigaret?" the man on the next bunk asked him.

"I got some rollin's if they'll do you any good."

"Sure. They're better than tailor-mades any day. Give us."

The other man rolled a cigaret.

"What are you so down in the mouth about? Afraid of going across?"

"No," said the sad soldier. "I ain't. But I just missed a meal, and I certainly hate to miss victuals, specially in the Army where they ain't none too much."

"How did you happen to loose dinner? Sleep over?"

"No. I was on my way to wash up, and some three-month's-wonder give me —— for not saluting him. He wagged his chin so long that by the time I got to the dining-hall the food was all gone."

"The dining-hall! How long you been in the Army?"

"Not long; only about a month."

"I thought so. No soldier ever calls the mess shack a dining-hall."

"Well, I don't claim to be a soldier, I'm a plumber."

The other man grinned and regarded the plumber through the cigaret smoke. The plumber was inclined to fatness. He had a high, square forehead, which seemed the higher because the head was partly bald. His teeth were yellow, and there was a gap on one side where two of them were missing. He looked to be about thirty-eight or forty years of age.

"My name's Green," said the other man. "Were you asked to this war, or did you just horn in?"

"I was invited," said the Plumber. "I wanted to go in ninety-eight, but I just got married and waited too long. This time my helper, he went in the Navy, and a young feller that was apprenticed to me run off and enlisted. Then my wife's uncle died and left her a bit of money, enough to keep her in comfort the rest of her life, so I went and registered. I give in my age to the draft board as thirty, and when I was called I just waived exemption, and here I am."

"How do you like the Army?" asked Green.

The plumber sighed.

"It's rather hard, what with carrying a rifle and running up on a bunch of sacks and doing butt strike and jumping into dummy trenches in the hot sun and scrubbing greasy pans and taking a lot of language from kids that are young enough to be my sons. But that ain't the worst of it."

The plumber looked out of the window, and it was plain that his thoughts were far away.

"Yes, indeed," after a few moments' silence: "there's worse than that."

"Well, what is it?" asked Green.

"I don't care much for the food," said the plumber. "Not that it ain't good, but

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there ain't much of it. I'd like to have just one good hearty meal and I'd be satisfied. I ain't had one now for some time."

"They do feed pretty light here," said Green: "but then you see most of these birds are deserters and A. W. O. L.'s, so they don't care whether they like it or not."

"How long do we have to stay here?"

"I don't know; not long. They ship you out of here as soon as they can get you equipped. Ever been to sea?"

"No, never," said the plumber, and wrinkled his brows again. "I live in Bloomington, Illinois, and the only time I I ever see a real ship was once when I went up to Chicago."

The conversation ended there. Green turned over on his bunk and began to read an old copy of the *Police Gazette*. The plumber yawned and then went out into the yard. He climbed the hill a way and looked about him.

THE camp stretched away into the distance, row upon row of wooden barracks, new and unpainted. They were arranged in blocks, and the block in which the plumber's barrack stood was surrounded with barbed wire. The next block was likewise, and in addition had huge lights at the four corners of it, and a high watch-tower.

The plumber looked at the wire and spat thoughtfully. Just a month before, he had held up his hand and become a soldier of the United States Army. By mistake or design, he did not know which, his name had been posted as a member of the overseas replacement draft before he had even been issued a rifle.

He had been taken sick on the way from Camp Grant to the coast and had been left in the hospital. He had been discharged from the hospital that morning and taken to the barrack inside the wire fence, which bore a huge sign, "Receiving-Barracks." They had taken away his blouse and puttees, so that he was a marked man and would have ten M. P.'s on his neck if he went outside the stockade.

The sun was hot, but the plumber paid it no heed. He watched the automobiles going up and down the road and troops marching by on their way to afternoon drill. Off in back of him somewhere he could hear the faint sound of singing, where some outfit was having song drill.

The plumber grinned. He had been to one of those. The whole battalion had been hiked clear to the other end of the camp, and then an enthusiastic singing-master had taken charge, and they had shrieked, "Over There" and "Where Do We Go from Here?" and a lot of worse slop, and then been hiked home again. The plumber learned a lot of new words that night when the song fest was discussed by his company.

There was a sharp thud from a kitchen near by—*whack, whack, whack*. Some cook was cutting up the meat for the evening slum and probably saving out a steak or two for himself.

The plumber's face clouded, and his brow became corrugated. It was apparent that he wrestled with some weighty problem.

A man came to the barrack door and blew a whistle. The plumber got heavily to his feet and dragged himself down the hill.

"You look as if you'd lost your last friend," Green told him. "What's worrying you?"

"I'm wondering what they're going to have for supper," said the plumber.

"Look alive now," said a sergeant who had a long list in his hand. "The men whose names I call step up and get your blouses and puttees. Then get in line over there."

The plumber's name must have been called, for he stepped into line; but Green, who had been waiting to hear what it was, was disappointed. Throughout the rest of their acquaintance Green never found out what the plumber's name was, nor did any one else except the officers, so henceforth he will be styled the Plumber, and the name capitalized.

The squad was marched up the hill to the back of the block, where they were ushered into another barrack, already half-full. Each man cast his few belongings upon the first empty bunk he saw and then looked about him. The Plumber was one of the last in and was forced to go up-stairs; but here he was in luck, for he got a bunk in a corner, which was an especially fine place, as one could lean back against the wall and read in comfort, which could not be done on a bunk in the center of the room.

A shrill blast again.

"Outside!" came a roar up the stairway.

Then a great clattering as the men stumbled out into the yard. They fell in in double rank anyway at all, and waited

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developments. A mild-looking officer appeared. He had a tiny mustache and wore spectacles. His collar ornaments betrayed the fact that he belonged to the quartermaster corps.

"Atten-shun!" he said in his very best training-camp manner.

Then he cleared his throat and wondered what he would do next.

Troops were usually sent overseas by divisions. Naturally each division would leave some of its personnel behind, in hospital or on special duty, absent without leave or for some other of half a dozen reasons.

These men, as fast as they reported at the port of debarkation, would be sent over as casuals, grouped into special units, called casual companies. In order that they might be properly taken care of on the journey, some unattached officer would be given command. This pleasant duty usually fell to officers of the staff corps, first because they always were unattached, and second because the powers thought a little service with troops would do them good.

It was realized that their experience as company officers was likely to be somewhat limited, so a mimeographed set of instructions had been drawn up on "How to Command a Company." A man can read, in a very short time, a set of instructions on how to remove an appendix, but that is no sign he will be able to remove it. Commanding a company is not a simple thing. There are lots of professional officers who have been doing it for fifteen years and have not learned the ins and outs of it yet.

The quartermaster lieutenant cleared his throat and looked at his instructions. The first paragraph was entitled, "Organizing the Company." Then it went on to say that a sober, experienced man should be chosen as first sergeant.

The lieutenant contemplated the company dubiously. They all looked sober, but none of them looked experienced. The Plumber was the oldest man there, but even to the most inexperienced eye it was plain that he was no soldier.

The officer looked first at the men again and then at his instructions. Finally he made up his mind and, nerving himself as does one who leaps into an icy lake, walked over to the right of the line.

"You're the first sergeant," he said to the man standing there.

Then to the next, "You're the mess sergeant," and so on down the line, reading off the grade from the mimeographed sheet and laying his hand on the shoulder of the man he promoted to hold it, until he came to the plumber.

"You're a cook," said the lieutenant.

The Plumber gasped.

"Great snakes!" he cried. "I can't cook, I'm a plumber. I can't even boil an egg."

The officer's eyes blazed. There'd be no insubordination in his company; no, sir.

"No back talk," he barked. "I said you'd be a cook, and a cook you'll be. You," said he to the next man, "will be a bugler. Now," continued the officer, "who can run a typewriter? I must have a company clerk."

A first sergeant, a bugler, a cook, no less, could be created by the simple appointment; but for a clerk one must have a typist, and typists can not be created by a wave of the hand even by the commander of the armies himself.

A man raised his hand, and declared that he could type, so he was appointed on the spot. The company was then allowed to stand at ease for a few minutes until first call for retreat blew, when they were brought to attention and forced to stand rigidly through assembly and the playing of "colors."

Now retreat is a very fine formation, very picturesque and very soul-stirring if rightly done. In large camps the playing of the band can be heard only faintly, if at all, by those troops not on the parade ground, so that the orders for the various movements of the manual of arms executed by the troops have to be given by guesswork.

The newly formed company, however, was fortunate in being near an open space where there was a band. All the lieutenant had to do was to consult a little slip of paper he had, on which were the commands for retreat in their order, as set forth by the immortal Major Moss, of whom mention has been made. At the call of "assembly," the command "attention" was to be given; but as he had given it ten minutes before, he said no word. The next time he heard the band he must say—

"Parade rest!"

This he did with success. Cautiously he stole a look at his directions.

"Attention."

And then—

"Present arms!"

He gave this last command very loudly in the sternest tone he could. Now when he

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gave a command the officer faced the company, and when it had been executed he swung about on the ball of the right foot and the heel of the left, and executed "parade rest" or whatever it was, himself.

But at the command "Present arms!" there was a hitch, a movement among the men of consternation, a murmur like the wind in distant trees. Clearly something was wrong. A hurried glance at the directions; he must have made a mistake.

"Inspection arms!" he bellowed. There was downright snickering at this, and the lieutenant lost the last of his composure. There was only one way to end it.

"Dismissed!" he shouted and fled into the shelter of the orderly room, pursued by the sound of hearty laugher.

There the officer mopped his brow and got out the manual to find out where his mistake had been. The new first sergeant entered just then in search of instructions.

"Sergeant," cried the lieutenant, "what was the matter with that outfit at retreat? Why didn't they execute those commands? Did I give the wrong ones?"

"No, sir. The commands was all right, but we didn't have no rifles to execute 'em with. Them commands was for troops under arms, and we ain't got no arms. You should have said—

" 'Right-hand salute!' "

"Well," said the lieutenant between his teeth, "that's the last formation they'll ever go to without arms. Tonight we draw equipment, tomorrow we load our barracks bags on the train, and the next morning we load ourselves on the boat. Then ho for France, where I can get rid of this gang, thank ——"

THAT night Green sat himself down on the bunk where the Plumber was puffing an odorous brier pipe and asked him how he did. The Plumber leaned comfortably back against the wall and watched the bustling scene in the barrack-room.

It was a large, bare room with a huge iron stove surrounded by a zinc cover like a furnace in the center. The bunks were ranged around the walls very close together, and the stairs to the lower floor went down in the corner. A number of electric lights gleamed through a haze of smoke, and some of the men were writing letters or reading by their light.

The man with ingrowing neatness—there was always one in every barrack—was sweeping up around his bunk and adding the refuse to the pile of cigaret-butts and old papers in the stove. On the far side of the room a mock retreat was going on, evidently a travesty on the one of the afternoon; for a tall soldier who flourished a poker that represented a sword and who had a safety-pin on each shoulder as insignia of rank, announced:

"When I give the command, 'Inspection arms' I want every one to inspect his arms; and if he ain't got any, let him do the best he can. And any one that laughs gets shot at sunrise."

"I'm havin' a lot of fun watchin' these fellers," said the Plumber. "I notice there's one over there got stripes on his shirt. He's a sergeant, ain't he? Why didn't he get appointed sergeant today when the looey was givin' out promotions?"

"He's probably some old regular that's got brains enough to keep his mouth shut. I guess a non-com's job in this madhouse would be a hot one. The privates won't have anything to do; no cook's police, no guard; we won't have any formations on the ship; so why be a non-com? By the way, are you worried about how you're goin' to cook?"

"No," said the Plumber. "I ain't; not a mite."

"You'd better be. A bunch of soldiers are worse on a bum cook than a pack of wolves on a deer."

"I guess I can make out. I took notice at supper. They ain't anything served but what comes in a can except potatoes, and 'tain't much of a trick to boil potatoes. One o' them food-ruiners pours some stuff like chocolate out of a can into a wash-boiler; adds hot water; presto! Coffee.

"Gets out the cleaver, opens some more cans, dumps what's in 'em into a pan, heats it up, pours on hot water; presto! Roast beef and gravy. Milk, vegetables, meat; just add hot water and serve. Yuh needn't bolt your food, 'cause there won't be no seconds. All yuh need to know to be a cook in the Army is how to open cans."

"Yes; but the cook has to get up at four o'clock every morning."

"Even so," said the Plumber, "they's perquisites that makes it a very nice job. First you can eat all you want yourself, which will be quite some of a novelty to me, being as how I ain't had a hearty meal since

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I come in the Army. And then I hear they issues lemon extract, which, mixed with a little sugar and water, makes a very palatable drink, with a fine after effect. Say, what's the matter with that guy? He looks like he had somethin' wrong with his eye."

The Plumber pointed with his pipe to a man who had his left eye covered with a white bandage.

"Probably he just came from hospital," said Green. "I think I remember him. He was in my ward. Yes, that's the guy; they took his eye out for something."

"What was you in hospital for?"

"Appendicitis."

The new first sergeant entered, very hard-boiled as to manner but giving rather the impression of a small boy playing pirate.

"Ever'body stick around," he announced. "We're goin' to issue equipment. Come down-stairs when your name is called."

Then he went down himself.

One by one as their names were shouted up the stairway the men went down and came back burdened with enormous heaps of clothes and equipment. The men in the casual company, of course, had nothing but the clothes they wore; and as it was an iron-bound rule that every one going overseas must be fitted out to the last shoe-string, each man received quite an amount. When the Plumber went down a man was engaged with the lieutenant in heated argument.

"I don't want no rifle, sir. I'm in the tank corps; they don't carry rifles."

"Maybe they don't; but the order says to give every one a rifle. Perhaps they want you to carry it over and save cargo space."

This was the seventy-fifth man by actual count that had kicked at getting a rifle, and the officer was rather weary explaining why it was necessary to issue them to all and sundry.

"Next man!" said the lieutenant briskly, and the Plumber stepped up.

There was a non-commissioned officer ("jaw-bone") by each of a number of huge boxes. The first one of the non-coms handed the Plumber a shelter half, into which he could put all the other things that a kind and indulgent Government gave him to play war with.

A jaw-bone non-com, by the way, is one who holds his grade by word of mouth alone and not by a duly issued warrant. The word jaw-bone literally translated means "credit," or "deferred payment." Thus if one buys anything jaw-bone he buys it with a promise to pay later. From this meaning the word has been shaded to mean anything not complete, such as a jaw-bone cook, a jaw-bone non-com, a jaw-bone shavetail, etc. "Would-be" is a better word, but not so military.

The Plumber stepped forward with his shelter half and was given by the first man a bacon-can and a condiment-can. The first was an oblong can about six inches long and two inches deep with a very tightly fitting cover. It was supposed to hold bacon on the march.

The condiment-can was smaller, with ridges running down the sides, so that one could measure out the amount he removed from it. The can was divided into two parts, one for sugar, one for salt, and it had a hollow cap that screwed on, into which pepper could be put. This was a wonderful invention, and was extremely useful to throw at a man that snored, since if he awakened in a rage and seized the can and threw it out of the nearest window, or into the bushes, there would be no great loss.

The next man handed out a long, snaky contrivance called a haversack and pack-carrier. It had a great number of straps dangling, which were used to hook the cartridge-belt on. There was a little pocket at the top for the mess-kit and a long flap under that, that folded up to any size one desired. This was for rations.

The rest of the pack-carrier was for the blanket-roll and was detachable, so that when a man went into action all he had to do to rid himself of the extra weight was to pull out a strap, and the blanket-roll parted company from the rest of the pack, leaving him his rations and mess-kit still with him. The blanket-roll could then be put in a position of safety, and after the battle was o'er the soldier could return and go to sleep under his blankets.

That was the theory anyway. In practise the blanket-rolls were removed and stacked before the men went under fire. The minute they were fired upon they usually took off the rest of the contrivance, together with everything else that was detachable and hurled it as far as they could. They never went back after their blankets, or if they did they would find that some other outfit had borrowed them.

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Guards? The other outfit probably borrowed the guards too, especially if they were short of cooks' police.

THE Plumber received a rope for his shelter half, a pole for same together with pins, a cartridge-belt, rifle, bayonet, first-aid packet, razor, towel and soap; also a tin hat and a blue denim bag called a barrack-bag. The cartridge-belt fitted him because he was inclined to stoutness. The belt was adjustable, of course; but it was made to carry a certain number of cartridges and could not be adjusted below a certain length, about a good fit for a man with a thirty-four waist. A thin man, of course, must do the best he could and go about with a belt that fitted like the double girth a horse attached to a two-wheel cart wears.

The towel was useful surely; and many of the men that were issued towels that night were still using the same towels to wipe their mess-kits with when they returned to that camp to be mustered out.

Every one put on his tin hat as soon as he got it, for it was very thrilling and seemed to bring the war near. These hats of steel had a soft felt lining and a leather strap to hold them on. In all that mass of junk that was loaded upon these men, the tin hat was the only thing that was never thrown away, that never mysteriously disappeared.

When a man went into action he put on his hat, put the strap back of his head—he couldn't put it under his chin and wear his gas-mask at the same time—and did not remove it for any reason whatsoever until he came out again and was well out of range. They made wonderful pillows; the lining was soft, and they were just wide enough so that if put on a slant they would keep a man's head out of the mud and give him a fine sense of security at the same time.

Two pairs of hobnailed shoes, two sets of underwear, a new uniform, six pairs of socks and a waist-belt, and the Plumber was complete. No comment on these last, except as to the longevity of the waist-belt. Uncle Sam is still holding up many a man's pants.

The Plumber, groaning, carried his burden up stairs and deposited it on his bunk, which it covered entirely. Green came up very soon, overflowing with words but with a rifle just the same, which he cursed most horribly.

"By this, that and the other thing," he raged, "I could cut that downy-lipped idiot's throat. Me, a non-commissioned officer above grade seven, and armed with a rifle! Not only that, but compelled to clean the cosmoline off it. It's enough to make a man desert!"

Rifles are always issued for the first time covered with a thick substance, a non-fluid oil, called cosmoline. This has to be cleaned off with whatever material the soldier has, and as he usually has none but a spare shirt it is quite an arduous task.

"Are you a non-com?" asked the Plumber in amaze.

"I hope to spit I am. I'm a master signal electrician."

"Why, that's almost as high as a second lieutenant, ain't it?"

"It is, you know! It's higher! I'm not the man," continued Green, "to give the history of my life to every recruit I meet, but I've been in this man's Army since nineteen-seven, and up until about a year ago it was a great job. When we got into this so-called war I got promoted to what I've got now, and I thought I was fixed for life. I wasn't though. There's nothing like a war to shoot an Army all to —— and wreck a lot of gravy-trains. I'll say mine struck an open switch about two months ago when I got ordered overseas.

"And now a rifle! It's four years since I had a rifle in my hand, let alone carry one. I'll square things on the ship though. I rate a stateroom. Non-commissioned officers above grade seven rate staterooms. I looked it up in the book."

Here the man with the bandaged eye appeared.

"Can one o' you guys help me roll up my pack?" he asked.

"Sure, I'll help you," replied the Plumber.

The two of them assembled the various parts of the pack, put the bacon and condiment cans in the proper places, and then prepared to make up the blanket-roll.

"What yuh gonna sleep in if you roll up your blankets now?" asked the Plumber.

"That's right, too," said the one-eyed man. "Well, I got three. I can make up the pack with one and sleep under the other two."

"What's the sweat about makin' up your roll anyway?"

"Well, I can get my stuff out of the way. Dog-gone this eye, it bothers me tonight."

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The one-eyed man patted his bandage tenderly.

"How'd you lose it?" asked the Plumber.

"I was holdin' a drill for a man and a burr flew off and hit me in the eye."

"How come you to hold a drill? Was you breakin' rocks?"

"I'm in the engineers," said the one-eyed man proudly, "and we was clearin' ground; blastin', you know."

"Engineers and electricians! My back!" exclaimed the Plumber. "What else is there in this outfit? I thought it was all infantry."

"Oh, no; there's lots of other guys here. Look at them hat-cords," pointing to a row of campaign hats hung against the wall above their owner's bunks. "There's signal corps, aviation, infantry, artillery, 'nother signal corps, motor transport—that's that purple one—and a cavalry. All members of the Hundred and Somethin' Overseas Casual Company."

"Ain't we a bunch o' mongrels!" marveled the Plumber. "Say, how come they're sendin' you overseas with only one eye?"

"You got me. Nobody seems to have nerve enough to stop me. Ain't any one said anything except, 'How strange!' yet."

Here the jaw-bone first sergeant entered.

"Tomorrow," he announced, "pack up your barrack-bags and make up your rolls. The barrack-bags go to the train at ten o'clock, and then we have a full-pack inspection."

After that, it being close to one in the morning, the casual company betook themselves to their bunks.

THE next day was one of horror and turmoil. The company marched three miles to the railroad tracks and loaded their bags in freight-cars. Then they went back and carefully made up their rolls for inspection, but were ordered to spread their equipment on their bunks instead. This they did with much cursing.

After they had waited an hour or two the inspecting officer arrived, walked rapidly around the room and went away. The order was shouted up the stairway to turn out in full pack. Hurriedly they made up their rolls again and scrambled down-stairs.

After that there was another show-down on the bunks. They were examined physically by the camp doctor, the regimental doctor, the overseas inspecting surgeon, the army transport service doctor, and a number of other doctors of no known affiliation. Each doctor did his inspecting alone.

"By ——," moaned the Plumber, "if a guy ever had any modesty before he sure would lose it here."

"Ain't they a bunch of foul balls!" agreed the one-eyed man. "One of 'em looks at my eye.

" 'You haven't any eye, my boy,' says he, as if I didn't know it.

"Then the shavey asks that big fat one how about takin' me overseas with one eye.

" 'I ain't inspectin' for sore eyes,' he says.

"So the shavey says nothin'."

A Y. M. C. A. man brought the men a bundle of post cards on which was printed the message—

The ship on which I sailed has arrived safely overseas.

The men were each allowed two cards, to be addressed as they saw fit and deposited in a bag which was left for that purpose. Then when the arrival of the ship in a foreign port was reported to the War Department the cards would all be mailed.

"But suppose the ship don't arrive safely?" asked the Plumber.

"I don't really know," said the "Y" man, "what would happen. They've all arrived safely so far."

"Well, we ought to get our money back or somethin'," muttered the Plumber, "if the ship gets sunk."

"You should worry," said one of the men. "If the boat gets sunk all you have to do is get into one o' them life-boats and row round awhile till a battleship comes along and rescues you. They got lots o' rafts and boats and things on those transports. I seen 'em in a picture."

"Maybe," agreed the Plumber; "but I'll bet the feedin' is awful poor while they're rowin' around. No, thanks; I can lose enough meals on land without losin' any on sea."

"You'll lose plenty of 'em all right," laughed another, "when those old Atlantic waves begin to roll."

"Well, don't let's worry about it now. These inspections are enough to keep our minds workin' without thinkin' of what troubles are ahead of us. We can go bugs if we start to think what we got comin' to us. Maybe if we don't get drowned at sea we'll get killed in battle, so what's the difference?"

"None," put in the one-eyed man. "Our parents get ten thousand bucks either way.

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I never could earn that much money stayin' alive, not if I lived to be a hundred."

Again it was midnight before the company went to bed. Hardly had their heads touched the pillow before they were awakened again.

"Up you get," called the jaw-bone non-coms. "We're goin' to France."

It was not yet daylight, and the company was taken to a new mess-shack for breakfast, evidently one that was used only for the last meal on shore, for the walls were decorated with penciled names and regimental numbers, with a message:

Leaving for France, Jan. 4, 1918.
On Our Way to Meet the Kaiser. The Fighting Boys from Philly, Christmas Day, 1917.
Left Here for Overseas

and the date

Others were of a more personal character:

Joe, I have gone overseas

and initials.

TOM MASSEY: If you see this write my mother. I have gone to France.
FLEA MORIARTY: Meet me in Berlin.

The men were a little subdued. Early morning is always a sad time anyway, and it is doubly so when one feels that this may be his last meal in his native land.

It has been said that men about to be hanged eat heartily. Certainly these men about to embark on the Great Adventure did themselves proud. And their Uncle Sammy showed his appreciation by giving them a fine breakfast. Bacon and scrambled eggs they had, hashed brown potatoes, corn bread, butter, sirup, coffee with cream and sugar, and second and third helpings if they wanted them.

Green sought the Plumber after the return to the barracks, when the men were trying to snatch a cigaret before falling in.

"Did you have a good meal for once?" Green asked. "Wasn't that a swell feed? Did you fill your belly up at last?"

"No," said the Plumber slowly and likewise sadly. "I didn't."

"You didn't! With all that chow? You must have an endless gut."

"No, 'tain't that; but you see," said the Plumber, pointing to a swollen jaw, "I had a —— of a toothache and couldn't open my mouth."

The whistles shrilled.

"Outside!" bellowed the non-coms, and the men formed rank in the gray dawn.

The lieutenant had a traveling-bag that he had forgotten to send the day before, and he directed two men to carry this, slung between them on a rifle. It felt as if it were laden with bricks. The roll was called, the ranks stiffened, the lieutenant gave a command that headed the company right for the bath-house but finally got them turned around, and they were off on the first leg of their three-thousand-mile trip.

It rained lightly after a while as the column went down a long hill past the gate of the camp, where the M.P.'s looked at them in a bored manner.

"Thank —— we're through with them guys," said some one, at which there was a general laugh.

Little did they know! The military police in France were to those in this country as a ravening wolf is to a nice old house-dog. Moreover, there were three of them to every soldier, or so it seemed.

They marched on through wooded country that was entirely new to them, past magnificent houses where servants were putting up shades and lighting the breakfast fires and grooms were opening stable doors. No one paid the column any attention; perhaps the sight of marching troops was too common.

Finally the marchers arrived at a high bluff, down which the road wound in a serpentine manner. Down they went through the mist, wondering when they were going to get where they were going and complaining of the weight of their packs.

On the last loop of the road they halted, and there on their left hand was a wide river with a wharf and a very old, rusty, unpainted steamboat, rather fat and stumpy-looking, at the end of it. There were a great many soldiers waiting on the wharf, probably to go aboard, and the Hundred and 'Steenth Overseas Casual Company sat down and waited as patiently as they could for their turn to embark. If a man learns nothing else in the Army, he learns patience.

"Is that the boat we're goin' to France on?" asked the one-eyed man of the Plumber, beside whom he had marched since they left the camp.

"I don't know," said the Plumber. "It don't look much like the pictures I seen of

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transports; but then nothin' in the Army is like the pictures they show of it."

They appealed to another man, who said dubiously that he thought that was the boat. Another swore it was not, yet his vehemence had a false note in it.

"I wouldn't put it beyond 'em to start us for France in that butter-tub after some of the things I had done to me in this alleged Army," declared Green, who came up just then from the rear of the column, where he had been stealing a smoke.

"You won't get much enjoyment out of a stateroom on that boat, will you?" asked the Plumber. "In fact I don't see nothin' on that ship but decks."

"It'll be all the easier to get off in case we get torpedoed," said the one-eyed man, and this effectually put an end to conversation.

SO THEY loaded themselves on the old hulk at last; and with an asthmatic toot from the whistle and much groaning of ancient machinery the steamer turned about and wheezed down-stream, making barely enough way to enable herself to answer the helm. The soldiers were rather pressed for room, and they stood about as does one in the subway at night during the rush hour. On some one else's feet half the time, and the other half with some one else's feet on his.

The men had room to move, but that was all; and when the ancient craft passed a battle-wagon at anchor or a motor-launch went by, the curious soldiers would all lean toward the object of interest, and their weight would flow to that side of the deck as a mound of jelly sways over when tipped. The butter-tub would heel over in a sickening manner, and those few of the deck-load who were wise in the ways of ships would hold their breaths; but a bearded face would thrust itself from the tiny pilot-house and would admonish the sightseers in no uncertain terms, so that they would sway their weight back to center again and the boat would right herself.

The Plumber was on the lower deck, and he had been separated from the one-eyed man in the crush. He looked about for Green but could see no sign of him.

"He's off seein' about his stateroom," thought the Plumber, and fell to contemplating the heights of Riverside Drive.

The morning advanced, but it made much faster progress than the loaded boat. The Plumber hailed a man in a cap and dungarees who appeared to be one of the boat's crew.

"When do we eat?" he asked.

"Eat? You don't eat nothin' on this boat!"

"We don't? How come we don't eat?"

" 'Cause yuh ain't goin' to be on it long enough."

"Why, ain't this the boat we go to France on?" asked the astonished Plumber.

"——, no! This is just a ferry-boat. The transports are down in Hoboken, where we're takin' you fellers. Haw! Haw! Ain't that rich!"

The dungareed man slapped his thigh and roared vulgarly.

"Thought this boat was goin' to take 'em to France! Haw! Haw! Haw! I ain't had such a laugh in months. Did you think I was in the Navy?" the grinning man asked the Plumber.

The Plumber lifted a corner of his lip and spat through the place where he had no teeth.

"I was thinkin'," said he, "that if you were in the Navy, how —— glad I was that I was in the Army."

The other man pondered this in his mind a while, and then departed muttering.

"I'm all cheered up now," said one of the onlookers who had overheard the conversation. "I was afraid we would have to stand up in this thing all the way across the Atlantic."

"Well, I'm cheered, and I ain't cheered," remarked the Plumber. "I'm glad we go across in somethin' else than this, but I think they might have fixed it so's we wouldn't miss dinner. They won't save a mite by skippin' so many meals because I'll get ga'nted down pretty soon, so that my clothes will be too big and they'll have to give me a new uniform. I wish the Army was like a hotel, where they refund your board money for every meal over three you lose in a row. I'd be rich by the time I got discharged."

In the shank of the afternoon the decrepit steamboat ducked in behind a dock and the soldiers were piled ashore, where they fell into ranks in their respective organizations. They were marched away through dark sheds and along railroad tracks and then under a long building. They halted here, and sat down and let their tongues hang out while they waited

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to see what would befall them next.

The building was a huge pier piled with packing-cases labeled A. E. F., but with no visible direction or address. The sliding shutters were all down, so that the soldiers could not see that there was a transport beside the pier. There was one narrow gang-plank that men were already passing over; but very few of the rest noticed it.

Finally the Hundred and 'Steenth arose from the floor of the pier and shouldered their packs again. They moved to the gang-plank and commenced to climb its steep ascent to the deck. The downy-mustached officer and the would-be first sergeant stood on one side of the gang-plank and a naval officer and a very salty-looking naval doctor stood on the other.

At the top of the ladder was a bored sailor of the common or flat-foot variety. As the first soldier approached the foot of the ladder he called out his name, which the first sergeant repeated and checked off on his list, the naval officer doing likewise.

The naval officer and the first sergeant each had a copy of the sailing-list, on which was every man's name, so that if the ship were sunk the powers that be would know who had been drowned in her. Also, they would be sure that no man got aboard of the transport that had no business there except perhaps to put bombs in the coal, or some such innocent pastime. The gob at the top of the ladder gave every man a slip of paper on which was written the man's section and bunk number, so that, being directed to his section by another flatfoot, he would have no trouble in finding his bunk.

The men climbed the ladder one after the other like sheep going into a car from a shipping-pen. Out of a clear sky came a bellow of thunder.

"Hey!" roared the naval surgeon. "What's the matter with that man's port lamp? Hold up now, let's have a look at it."

He peered under the one-eyed man's bandage.

"Here, this man has only got one eye; he can't go! Stand aside, you!"

"But we can't leave him on the dock," protested the downy-mustached lieutenant. "Besides, I've got to account for him."

"You can account for him by saying I wouldn't let him on the ship. As for whether you leave him on the dock or not, that's up to you. The Army takes care of its own on land, thank ——; the Navy has trouble enough with 'em at sea without bothering about those ashore."

"But it isn't my shootin' eye," protested the one-eyed man.

The naval surgeon beat upon the railing of the gang-plank so that it well nigh carried away. The port-holes of the transport framed eager faces so that the ship's side took on the appearance of a portrait gallery. It would appear that the surgeon's little peculiarities were known.

He spoke feelingly a while, to the great delight of the listening sailors, until the other officer reminded him that the line was being held up and that the skipper had hopes of getting the ship loaded that afternoon. The doctor ceased his exposition; the line moved upward again and the one-eyed man wandered off sadly down the dock, where he disappeared behind some wagon-bodies.

THE Plumber consulted the slip that the sailor at the head of the ladder handed him. It had on it two numbers, one the section and the other his bunk number. Another flatfoot directed him down a hatchway, and still another waved him along a dark passage, whence came angry murmurs and a heavy smell of disinfectant.

The Plumber noticed as he slid over the steel sheets that composed the deck that it was very dark down there, and that the ceiling was overclose for comfort. He came out suddenly into a dimly lighted space that looked like the stack-room in a public library, save that there were no books on the stacks. There was a confused murmur of voices, but no men were visible.

On closer inspection the Plumber discovered that what looked to be book-shelves were pieces of pipe about the size of ordinary water-pipe, laid lengthwise in wooden supports. There was a narrow strip of canvas between the pipes, and on the wooden supports were numbers. It seemed that these were the bunks. They were in tiers of three and completely filled the compartment from side to side and from deck to deck.

Between every other row was a very narrow aisle, just wide enough for a man to squeeze his way through by turning sidewise. On the far side of the compartment were some port-holes, and the men who had bunks near them could be heard loudly

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calling to those about them to observe their good fortune.

The Plumber put his pack on his bunk and laid his overcoat and slicker on top of it. He wondered where he was going to put all his stuff when he wanted to sleep in that bunk. Well, that problem could be solved when the necessity arose. He was thankful that he was on the first deck down, for there was yet another deck below him.

The smell of chemicals was well-nigh overpowering, so the Plumber betook himself to the upper deck again, which was already thickly crowded with soldiers. It appeared that the deck space was going to be as well filled on the transport as on the ferry that had brought them down the river that morning.

In a little while the last of the soldiers came aboard, the gang-plank was hauled in and the railing dropped into place. The passengers were as completely shut off from land as they would have been ten miles at sea.

The Plumber made tentative inquiries of one of the sailors about supper.

"Down that hatch," said the sailor. "They spread mess-gear about five. All the guys in those two forward compartments eat down there. Ain't allowed to eat on deck."

"Do we sit down to tables?" asked the Plumber.

"Yeh, they got tables down there," replied the flatfoot ambiguously.

The Plumber would have pursued his inquiries further, but the sailor began to paw the air with his hands in a strange manner; and the Plumber, following the other's gaze, saw that a sailor on a transport moored to the opposite dock was similarly engaged. The two were holding an animated conversation at long distance, wigwagging some choice details of their last shore leave, so the Plumber betook himself elsewhere to wait for the bugle to blow for supper. He wandered aft to see what the stern of the ship looked like, and thus disaster befell him, which happened in this wise.

The food for the troops was cooked in two kitchens, one forward and the other amidships. The forward kitchen supplied the crew and the troops in the two forward compartments. When the food was cooked, it was carried in kettles and pans down the forward hatch and spread out on the first deck, where there was an open space, and then the men could come and get it there.

Around the walls of this space were wooden troughs filled with sea-water and with pipes running through them by means of which live steam was injected into the water. These troughs were for washing the mess-kits, and the water in them was always very hot.

Now then, when the pans of food began to be carried along the deck the lounging soldiers immediately discovered them. Their stomachs had been protesting loudly for some time, for most of these men had been without food since early morning. The pan-carriers were followed, their destination was learned, and the soldiers immediately scattered to get their mess-kits.

When the Plumber returned from his stroll he discovered a line of men sitting down on the deck with their legs decorated with mess-kits. The handle of the lower half of the mess-kit was stuck down one legging, the knife, fork and spoon were stuck down the other, and the upper part of the mess-kit hung on the fork. The cup was hung on the waist-belt. Thus the soldiers had both hands free to roll cigarets or to sit upon, as the need arose.

"Has chow call blown?" asked the Plumber in amazement.

"Dunno," said one of the men, "but we seen the line forming, an' we got in it."

The Plumber rushed below in horror. The alleyway between the bunks was jammed with men, and it was impossible for a man of the Plumber's girth to get through. Here was a sad situation; for if he could not get his mess-kit naturally he could have no supper unless he was fortunate enough to borrow one after its owner was through with it. It occurred to him then that he might crawl along through the bunks and so reach his own, which he did. Then to find the end of the mess-line.

This was easier said than done. The passage was filled with men, packed tightly together, chest to back, for the double purpose of conserving space and preventing any one from "horning in" on the line. The Plumber climbed to the deck. The line still stretched, like a hungry snake, around the forehatch, up and down both sides of the deck and up the ladder to the promenade deck, where the officers' quarters were.

Here the Plumber found the end of it. He sat down with his back against the rail

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and smoked a cigaret to stifle as much as he could the gnawing of his vitals. Chow call blew, and the line moved, very, very slowly, an inch at a time; but it moved, and that was enough to keep hope alive in the waiting men's hearts.

The sailors, eating at tables and having their food brought to them, were finished long before the soldiers, and they immediately came out on deck and began to skylark for the edification of the landlubbers who still awaited their supper. Some of them rove a whip through the forward cargo derrick, and while one man stood at the steam-winch two others got into the bight of the whip, sitting opposite each other, with their legs dangling, as children do in a swing.

Then the man at the winch ran the pair of them up to the head of the derrick-boom and swung them around and carried them out over the water and let the whip run off the drum at terrific speed and then stopped it suddenly, so that the two first dropped like lead toward the water, and then brought up with a jerk that tossed them into the air, all of which the two flatfeet at the end of the boom hailed with crows of childish delight, while the watching soldiers held their breath and forgot their hunger in their excitement.

Then two more wild sailor men had a race up the mast and to the deck again, going up the ratlines like monkeys, and after they had come to the crow's-nest, sliding down again by a backstay. The race was a dead heat, as both of them struck the deck at the same instant.

There was wild applause from the soldiery, and two more sailors did the same thing. This time one of them beat the other so far in the climb that he started back again descending the ratlines; but, seeing the other sliding down a stay, the one on the ratlines made a jump for the same stay, which he caught below his rival, and then hung there, grinning, until the other man came down and stopped perforce, as there was no getting by the man who was lower on the stay.

After some jeering the two started for the deck, but when they were about twenty feet up, the uppermost man let go his hold and dropped, so he was acclaimed the winner, having reached the deck first, and loud and tumultuous was the applause from the mess-line.

IT WAS quite dark by the time the Plumber reached the tables where the food was being served, but it was worth waiting for. Roast veal with rich brown gravy, mashed potatoes, turnips, bread with raisins in it, coffee and apple pie. Pie! If so much water had not been running from the Plumber's salivary glands he would have wept.

He sat down on the steel deck on the first bare spot he could find and wrapped himself around that supper. When his mess-kit was as clean as his tongue could make it he stood up in hopes of a second helping; but the food was all gone. While the food was wonderfully well cooked and of a richness and variety unknown in the Army, the man who issued the rations knew just how many men there were to feed and just how much each one of them ought to get at a meal. There was therefore very little if any left for a second round, although if it was worked right one or two out of all that company might get seconds.

The Plumber washed his mess-kit in the trough and was meditatively shaking the water from it when he noticed a man near him who looked familiar. The Plumber leaned nearer.

"Why, how the —— did you get on this boat?" he asked. "I thought they give you the razz!"

The other man looked up in a startled manner. It was the one-eyed man, but without his bandage.

"Shsh!" he whispered. "Don't yell so loud."

He looked apprehensively about him; but they were alone except for a few belated soldiers in a far corner and a man who was wiping up the tables.

"I took off my bandage and went right along back to the gang-plank. You know those two Navy guys stood on the right hand side, and when I come up I just called my name and walked right by. I kept my face turned away from 'em. Simple enough."

"But didn't the lootenant or the top see you?"

"Sure, but it wasn't nothin' in their young life. They didn't want to leave me on the dock, and I sure didn't want to stay."

"Yeh," said the Plumber; "but they'll catch you on the ship, and you'll get it poked to you for fair."

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"I should worry," said the one-eyed man. "They can't kick me off in mid-ocean, and we'll be at sea in an hour, a sailor just told me so. He said to be sure and stay below after supper, because they locked the hatches down right after dark and didn't open 'em again until morning, so that if a guy was on deck when the hatches was locked he'd have to stay on deck all night."

"We better stay down then, hadn't we?" said the Plumber. "Well, I had a long day of it anyway. Let's go to bed right now."

They went into the after compartment. The Plumber crawled into his bunk, which was a bottom one, and the one-eyed man sat on the one opposite, and they conversed a while. Then he went off to his own bed, and the Plumber slept.

The clattering of hobnails on the steel deck awakened the Plumber, who dressed hurriedly—it did not take him long, for soldiers always slept in their underwear—and rushed on deck, eager for his first sight of the boundless sea. The sea was not very boundless, for the ship was still at the dock. His disappointment did not prevent him, however, from rushing below to get a good place in the mess-line, and from making a good breakfast on oatmeal, bacon, scrambled eggs and coffee.

While the Plumber was enjoying an after-breakfast smoke he encountered Green.

"Did the captain give you a stateroom?" asked the Plumber innocently.

Green looked at him searchingly, but the Plumber's countenance was free from guile.

"Ah, that brass-bound clam-digger!" said Green. "He'd eat a snake if he could hold it long enough."

"Then he didn't give you a stateroom," guessed the Plumber.

"No, he didn't. He put me to work in the dynamo room, eat with the crew and bunk with the soldiers like everybody else. That's all the consideration the Army gets from the Navy. They're jealous of us, that's what."

All that morning the ship lay at the dock; but after dinner the ropes were cast off, and she was towed out into the stream. A red-faced man with much gold on his cap leaned over the weather cloth on the lofty bridge and bellowed—

"Troops below!"

The troops went down into their dungeon cursing, for they had expected to be able to see the sights on their way down the harbor. The few who had their bunks near port-holes exulted.

"We can look out the windows," they cried. "To —— with that old kill-joy!"

But alas, a sailor with a huge wrench was bolting a steel cover over each port-hole.

"Whatchuh doin' that for?" the soldiers asked.

"So you birds won't be openin' it some night when we're in the submarine zone and lettin' a beam o' light go out that every sub within fifty miles can see. That port don't get opened till we get to the other side or to Davy Jones' locker."

"Why did that officer chase us all down?" asked some one.

"So some spy won't count you and know how many troops we got goin' over. They won't let you up till we're out of the harbor."

They didn't either. The forehatch was clapped down and battened. The only exit now from the troop quarters was a narrow ladder that led into the port alleyway, and so out onto the forward well-deck.

There were two other ladders, both of which went up through the fore hatch, but they were labeled "Emergency Exit" and could not be used. There was another ladder into the alleyway from the rear of the compartment, and all the fresh air that went to this compartment and to the compartment on the lower deck must come through these two openings. Of course, as the ship steamed ahead, there would be considerable draft through the forward alley door, and so down the forward ladder; but whether it would ventilate the hold where the soldiers lay like sardines remained to be seen.

When the troops were allowed on deck again it was late in the afternoon. The Plumber and the one-eyed man dashed across the deck and onto the forecastle, whence they had a fine view.

On the left hand was a huge gray ship, so near that they could almost make out the features of the men on her decks. On the right was another ship with only one stack, brilliantly painted like an Indian with a great streak of black zigzagging across her side. Astern were three more. Far, far, behind the last ship, almost lost in the haze, was a blue line, the heights of Navesink.

"I guess we're on our way," said the one-eyed man solemnly.

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"I guess we are too," agreed the Plumber; and they said no more, for the spell of the vasty deep and the Great Adventure lay heavily upon them.

SUDDENLY a most brilliant light gleamed from the shadows far astern. It winked and winked, long flashes, then short ones, irregularly spaced.

"That's a lighthouse," announced the Plumber.

" 'Tain't either," said one of the other soldiers. "The flashes ain't regular enough. And it's too low down. I know a lighthouse when I see one."

There was a sailor on the forecastle, rooting in a chest that was lashed to the deck there, and the soldiers appealed to him for information regarding the still winking light.

"That's the cruiser," he said. "She's signaling the course we're to take and the speed and a lot of other dope. She'll be out ahead of us pretty quick."

"Can she catch up with us that quick?" asked the soldiers.

"I'll say she can. She can run circles around these old scows. Especially that —— old *Annie*."

The sailor shook his fist at the transport on the port side, the gray one. He stood up and apostrophized the other ship.

"—— your old barnacled sides," he muttered, "I hoped we'd be rid of you this trip, but I see you're still bargin' along. I hope you get athwart some torpedo's course before we get into soundings.

"That old oyster smack," he informed the wondering soldiers, "and the jelly-livered periwinkle that's skipper of her, are the worst Jonahs in the North Atlantic fleet. I made two passages with her in convoy, and one we missed a mine by the skin of our teeth. The other time we had a submarine alarm, and I was peekin' through the sights on that gun there when up comes a periscope and tower, lookin' so close I could reach out and grab hold of it. I hollered, 'Mark!' like ——, and the next thing I saw was the old *Annie's* bow shovin' right across our line of fire, so we missed a shot and lost the sub, 'cause we could have blown it out of the water sure."

A sailor came out of the forecastle and went aft, blowing upon a small silver whistle.

"Uniform o' the day, watch caps!" he called, and his voice faded out down the alleyway.

"*Wheeee-eeee!*" went his whistle.

"Uniform o' the day, watch caps!"

The cargo booms had been let down so that one end rested on the forecastle, and three sailors were lashing them in place. Canvas covers were put on the hoisting-gear and donkey engine; a lookout was placed in the crow's-nest; and the entire ship's company, soldiers and sailors, prepared themselves for perils by sea.

The night was dark and starless, and the soldiers awoke in the morning to gray skies and tumbling seas. Not a real storm, but a healthy blow. Enough to upset the stomach, and arouse a desire to be back on firm ground. The Plumber crawled out from between his bunk and the one above and tried to decide what was the matter with him.

"Somethin'," he remarked to the darkness, "has disagreed with me."

He went forward to the compartment where the men ate; but it was not yet time for breakfast, and there was no one there.

The Plumber stood there a moment, listening to the talking of the ship. There were innumerable tiny sounds, whines and groans, rivets whispering and a slam of far-away doors when the ship rolled.

The Plumber took hold of a stanchion to steady himself. The water in the troughs sloshed back and forth, and the steam-pipes first roared when the water was shallow, and then gurgled and choked as the vessel rolled the other way and the water was deep again. From the compartments where the troops were came cries of distress and incoherent requests for a quick death. Over the ship went—*thud! Bang!* A sea crashed on her deck, and then would come the soft rustle of the broken water running across the plates and into the scuppers.

The Plumber decided to go on deck. He was impelled to this course by a number of reasons, the first being the fact that he wanted to get some fresh air, and the second being that in case of accident he did not want to be in any dining-room.

He went up the ladder into the alleyway and peered out from the open door. There was a soldier on guard there, but he seemed to have little regard to his duty, for he swallowed often and hard, and had a nice green tinge to his gills that went well with his olive-drab coat.

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The well-deck was deserted of soldiers, but there was a line of sailors hunched against the driving rain, waiting with their buckets for a fresh-water issue. The machinist's mate, or whoever it was that had charge of the faucet from which the fresh water was drawn, was late in appearing, and the waiting men cursed and danced about, and threatened all sorts of things when the tardy one did appear.

The Plumber stepped over the weather-board and crossed the deck to the rail, over which he looked. A gray-green ocean was below him, sliding up and down in a most horrible fashion. First it was right under his feet, the next minute it would drop, drop, to an unbelievable depth far below him, so that he could see the red of the ship's bottom, and watch the water running off the plates. Then *swoosh!* The sea was at his feet again.

The gods of the deep called to him for tribute, but the poor man had not eaten since supper and could not comply. Seasickness on a full stomach is bad enough, but on an empty stomach it is far worse.

"My ——," groaned the Plumber, "and I left Bloomington for this!"

He tore his eyes from the sliding water and looked across at the *Annie*, where she wallowed like some great whale. He was surprized to see that she was not rolling very much; at least it did not appear that way. Every once in a while a sea would slap the other ship's side, and then the spray would leap high in air and go drifting off to leeward.

The *Annie* was to windward of the ship the Plumber was on, so that the Plumber's ship did not get the full force of the wind and waves; but the *Annie* dropped back a bit after a while and then the wind whooped, and the spray flew, and dollops jumped over the rail and banged on the deck.

Most of the water that came aboard was splashed up by waves striking the vessel's side. The splashes made considerable noise when they struck the deck just the same, and the sailors were well doused.

The men who had been waiting for their fresh water got it and departed, leaving no one in sight but two men who were putting new lashings on a gangway and the poor Plumber, who had not the courage to let go his hold on the rail and crawl back to the door. He was too far aft to get very much of the spray, but the rain was fast soaking him to the skin. The cold air felt good on his face and seemed to take away some of the sickness, but the wind bit at the same time, for he was clothed only in breeches and shirt.

It seemed to the Plumber after a while that the roll of the ship was more pronounced. Moreover, she dipped her head now and then and would come up from a plunge and shake herself like a dog. The other ships tumbled about, just visible through the driving rain and the spray, with the smoke from their stacks blowing off down-wind like horses' tails.

The Plumber turned from watching them and hung over the rail again. When he raised his head, he looked right into a high wall of green, a cliff of glass, that towered straight up to the heavens. The ship leaned toward it and then started to rise as a man rises from his chair to meet an adversary. Up, up, the ship rose.

"Hang on!" cried somebody.

BERRAM! The Plumber fell overboard; the ship was sinking, was going straight to the bottom. He choked, strangled, and his still open eyes could see dark bundles floating about him.

"We're sinkin' sure," he thought. "There go our barrack-bags."

He had perfect command of his faculties. He put out his hand even, to push away a rock that loomed through the bright green water. It was very light as the ship plunged downward, and the Plumber could plainly see the snake-like seaweed that waved about him. A foot crushed into his face; he opened his mouth to protest, and all was black.

"FOR ——'s sake," said a far-away voice, "get off me."

The Plumber idly wondered who could speak far down beneath the waves. The next minute a rough grasp seized him and he felt himself lifted to his feet. He promptly collapsed.

"The fool," said another voice, "what's he doin' on deck anyway? Wonder he didn't go overside."

The Plumber realized that he could breathe freely and opened his eyes. He lay in a heap on the deck across from where he had been and in the angle between the rail and the bulkhead. As the water cleared from his eyes he saw that a sailor was sitting opposite him, wiggling a loosened tooth, and another was struggling to his

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feet and wringing the water from his face. Some more sailors were standing on the deck regarding the three half-drowned men. One of the former spoke.

"You two birds that don't know any better than to run from a sea ought to be drowned, and if it hadn't been for that soldier we'd let you both go overside. We like to broke our necks jumpin' down here to pull you out."

The sailor with the wiggly tooth coughed and wiped the tears from his eyes.

"A —— of a lot of pullin' out you did! You let that fat guy sit on my head for an hour. We wouldn't go over the bulwarks anyway; the sea wasn't big enough."

"I'll say it was," replied the other man. "It filled the well-deck right level. All we could see was arms and legs stickin' out of it. It's a wonder you didn't get your head cracked against some of that machinery."

He turned to the Plumber—

"How you feel now?"

The Plumber made no reply. In the first place he had swallowed so much water that he could not speak, and in the second place the fact that he was not drowned but still on the ship was so surprizing that he would have been speechless, even if his lungs weren't full of the North Atlantic.

Then from the bridge came a bellowed order—

"Troops below!"

The Plumber, being the only "troops" in sight, departed.

The Plumber lowered himself down the ladder, clinging for dear life when the ship rolled, and looked into the mess compartment. Three or four sailors were sitting there, smoking cigarets and holding pans of food on the tables to prevent them from sliding to the deck when the ship rolled.

They must have come down from the galley while the Plumber was hanging over the rail, for if he had seen them he would have followed them at once, though all the North Atlantic flowed across the deck. The sailors hailed him with coarse laughter.

"Look who's here!" they cried. "Been takin' your mornin' dip? Little plunge for a bracer? Breakfast's ready now; hurry up."

The Plumber, all saturated as he was, went in and inspected the food. A sailor scooped up a handful of hash and held it under the soldier's nose.

"Have some hash?" he queried. "Nice fresh hash, just made this 'mornin'. We can't get anybody to eat it."

The Plumber took one look, one sniff.

The bottom of his stomach dropped clear down to his toes, then snapped back again against his diaphragm—*swoosh!* On deck! On deck! With swimming head he clawed his way up the ladder; and, standing upon the now prostrate form of the guard, he thrust his head outside the alley door and did what he could. One of the black gang hurrying to the fireroom to go on watch found him thus and took pity on him.

"Why don't you change your clothes, soldier?" he asked.

"I ain't got any more," replied the Plumber weakly.

"Come wit' me," said the coal-passer; and he led the Plumber down the alley, helped him through a door and half-carried him below to a warm grating over the boilers. "Hang your clothes over the rods," directed the sailor, "an' they'll dry in a jiffy."

There was a hook-pot at the other end of the grating so that the watch could have a mug-up when they desired, and the coal-passer brought the Plumber a mug of coffee from it.

"Drink dis," he said and poured the scalding contents into the soldier's stomach.

The Plumber dragged off his wet clothes and hung them to dry. It was wonderfully warm there, and the coffee did seem to settle his stomach. All about him were shining brass rods and the white coverings of the boilers. He could hear the steady whir of a dynamo somewhere, and little coughs and mysterious clickings.

Far above him was the engine-room skylight with the rain beating on it as the gusts hurled the drops against the glass. It reminded him of the patter of rain on the tin roof that used to put him to sleep when he was a boy. He sat there, warm and comfortable, and watched the steam rise from his wet garments. His brow furrowed, and the old worried look came back to his face.

"I'm glad they had hash for breakfast this morning," he said to the boilers, "because I'll never be able to see it again without bein' sick. It might just as well have been steak. Doggone it, there was all that food, not a man in sight to eat it, an' me sick. Wouldn't that break your heart!"

Then he gave himself to the drying of his clothes and seeing that they were not

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shaken off the rail as they swung back and forth with the motion of the ship.

The night of the tenth day at sea the Plumber was on guard at the end of the alleyway that opened on to the forward well-deck. Every day each company furnished a detail for guard, and sentinels were posted at the head of every ladder and at all the entrances to the troop quarters to prevent disorder if there should be an alarm at any time during the day or night, and this day had been the turn of the Plumber's company.

The ship was in total darkness except for a tiny blue light at the heads of ladders and over doorways. There was one over the Plumber's head.

The Plumber sat just outside the door on a pile of life-rafts. The one-eyed man, who had come up to talk a while and relieve the monotony of his friend's tour of duty, was beside him. One of the flatfeet came along and asked if they had any eating-tobacco about them.

"I just have to have a smoke before I go to bed," said the flatfoot, "but when I'm at sea I can't 'count of the rule against smokin'. So if I chew a bit it does me almost as much good."

The Plumber gave him some pipe tobacco, which the flatfoot eagerly accepted and wadded into his cheek. He chewed in silent enjoyment while the Plumber and the one-eyed man looked ahead to where the cruiser plowed through the waters, a great black lump with only a tiny light at her stern to show the convoy where she was.

The other ships maintained the same positions as they had when starting. To port the *Annie* still pounded along, now level with the Plumber's ship, now a little behind, then a little ahead. The darkness and the silent power of the sea and the mystery of those great black hulks with the phosphorus gleaming and twinkling at bow and stern, lay heavily upon these men.

"Ten days at sea," said the Plumber, "and we ain't there yet. The ocean would be a great place if there wasn't so much water in it. You're sittin' up late tonight," he said to the one-eyed man. "Ain't you sleepy?"

"Not me!" replied the one-eyed man. "I can't think of goin' into that black hole without gettin' sick at my stomach. The air is so thick down there that if you swung your hand around quick you'd skin your knuckles."

"It does get pretty ripe down there," agreed the flatfoot; "but you see they ain't got no way to ventilate them places. When this ship was a liner that was cargo space."

"Ripe! I'll say it gets ripe!" snorted the one-eyed man. "The stink that comes up those ladders would knock you down. And it's so dark down there, and all the guys snorin', and the disinfectant, and the feet, an' everything. ——! And me thinkin' I was puttin' somethin' over on 'em when I piled on board after they told me to stay off! I shouldn't wonder if they knew it was me anyway."

He was probably right, at that.

"Well," he concluded, "I hope the war lasts a good while, so's we won't have to come back right away."

"You ain't there yet," said the flatfoot. "Tomorrow we get into the submarine zone, and chances are we'll get knocked off. The Germans have sunk a lot of transports, but the Navy Department don't let it out. I know. I seen lots of fellers in Brest and Bordeaux that was on 'em. The subs come up an' shell the boats afterward, so they ain't many survivors."

"What's the battleships doin' all that time?"

"They ain't no battleships around, only destroyers."

"But don't they try to drive off the sub?"

"Humm-er-why they're too busy takin' care of the ships that ain't torpedoed."

The Plumber's rifle slid to the deck with a loud bang, at which he and the one-eyed man both jumped.

"Tell me," said he, "don't the lookout or somebody see the sub in time to shoot at it?"

"Naw," said the flatfoot: "the sub comes up in the sun right at daybreak and sticks a nickel-plated periscope up. He spots the course and the speed and lets one fly. Then he comes up and pots what's left with his six-inch. Do you know why them ships are camouflaged?"

"To make 'em invisible," answered the two soldiers together.

"Ha, ha!" laughed the flatfoot. "That's what a lot of boobs think. You can't make a ship invisible! How you goin' to make it invisible when it's on the horizon? Nix, that paint's streaked on there so's the German can't dope out the speed. Some of

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'em got false bows painted on 'em so's he can't tell what course they're on.

"That's what camouflage is for, to spoil the sub's dope. That's why the ships zigzag, because after the sub's commander has doped out the course and speed and fired the torpedo, the transport's on another leg of the zigzag, on a different course, and the torpedo misses. You wait till tomorrow; you'll see it work.

"We pick up the destroyers about dawn, and the old cruiser goes back to New York. This time tomorrow night we may be swimmin' around out there, or else restin' on the bottom. Well, s'long."

And the flatfoot went off the forecastle and turned in.

"He's a cheerful guy, ain't he?" said the one-eyed man.

"I think he's full of hop," remarked the Plumber. "These gobs have been stringin' me all the way across. You can't believe one of 'em on oath. But then, even if the Navy is full of liars, they sure are good feeders. I'd be puttin' on flesh if I had half of a chance."

"Ain't yuh gettin' enough to eat?"

"Well, yes, I'm gettin' enough. But I like to sit down to table and square my elbows and stretch my legs and put it down till I feel good an full, till I won't want no more, not a bite. You can't do that in the army."

"We had a big feed the morning we sailed. I e't three mess-kits full. Didn't you get enough that time?"

The Plumber winced at the memory of that morning.

"No, I didn't," he said sadly. "I had a terrible sore tooth that day and couldn't get my mouth open. Then the first day at sea, there wasn't none at breakfast at all; they was beggin' some one to come eat, and I was that sick I thought I was going to die. I don't think I'll ever get another chance like that because none gets sick now, and I hear the food in France is awful scarce and what there is of it you could put in your eye without any inconvenience at all."

"Four days and we'll be in," said the one-eyed man. "I hope some German U boat takes a try at us. I want some excitement. I'm gettin' mighty sick of this —— old tub, walkin' around the decks all day, tryin' to find a place to sit down and standin' in line for a couple of hours every meal before I get fed.

"I got —— today, too. I was on K. P., and I dumped a bucket of spud-peelin's over the side. You would have thought they was diamonds there was such a holler. You're supposed to dump swill in a big box that gets put overboard once a day.

"They claim that throwin' stuff overboard puts the subs on our trail. The officer that bawled me out said a sub could follow a convoy clear across the Atlantic by the swill that was thrown over the side."

"How was I supposed to know that? I had a good mind to tell him that all a sub needed to do to spot us was to stick its nose in the air and take a good sniff, and it would know we were on our way two days before we got anyways near.

"Well, I'm for bed. So deep!"

And, seizing his nose with one hand and elevating his right arm as high as it would go, he ducked into the door and down the ladder.

THE ships entered the danger zone just at daybreak. When the soldiers came on deck, to right and left, behind and ahead, turning and twisting and rolling like porpoises, was a school of destroyers, gaily painted in great streaks of blue and white and black. They dived and leaped, and rolled their decks under, for there was a dirty chop to the sea, and a fine rain was falling.

The cruiser had drawn ahead, and the soldiers could just make out the seas pouring over her bow and rolling off the gun-ports. While they watched her she made a wide swing to starboard, the smoke trailing from her stacks, and straightened out on the back track.

The watching thousands in the convoy looked at her soberly, and not a few felt a slight draft on their feet, as the gray ship disappeared in the rain. She was their last touch with home. There was no skylarking that morning, and the soldiers went to breakfast with little appetite, casting calculating looks at the piles of life-rafts about the decks and at the ropes coiled along the rails.

Daily since leaving port they had had submarine drills. A bell would ring loudly, the gun-crews would jump to their stations and the soldiers would go below. After a little time bugles would blow and the order, "Abandon ship" would be given.

Each man had been given a paper bearing

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on it the number and location of the raft or boat that he was assigned to, so that he knew at once where to go. Nothing was said about what he should do if he found the raft blown into kindling-wood by an explosion.

However, when the bugles blew and the bosuns' pipes shrilled, the sailors on deck would throw off the hatch-coverings with a great clattering of boards, the men would all climb up the emergency exits, and in a few minutes every one would be on deck giving an opportunity to certain ones who had purposely stayed behind to sneak among the bunks and steal tobacco.

There were great piles of life-rafts all about the decks with a hatchet hanging near to cut the lashings. There were a great number of ropes coiled along the rail, with more axes. These ropes were to be thrown over the side, and the soldiers could lower themselves into the rafts with them. The rafts had to be dumped bodily overboard, and if they drifted away while they were being loaded that would be nobody's hard luck but the men's who were supposed to go off the ship on them.

The boats were mostly for officers, but enough enlisted men were assigned to each one to row it. Also, in each man's bunk was a life-preserver, a sort of jacket made of kapok that could be used as a pillow when not needed to preserve life. The grease from innumerable heads would tend to keep out the water. When in the submarine zone each man had to have his life-preserver with him at all times, if not on his person. The man carried them about with them, and they made very excellent cushions.

On the morning of the fourth day after entering the submarine zone they sighted land. The sun shone in a deep-blue sky, and the morning was pleasantly warm. There were a few fishing-boats out, little craft with great red sails, so that the soldiers knew they must be near the land. And then at about eleven-thirty they could see it from the forecastle, a long, blue line on the horizon's edge. So there was France, the land of destiny.

It was about ten minutes to twelve; the mess-line had already formed, and the tail of it began to run out of the alley door and across the deck. The soldiers stood about in the warm sun, looking down at the placid ocean, and thinking that the old ship was not so bad after all, now that they had passed their last night on her. The gob trumpeter stopped at the starboard gun and spoke to one of the gun-crew while he waited until it should be time to blow for mess.

There was a blast from the *Annie's* siren, a thundering, terrifying roar, a shriek that set every tooth in that convoy on edge. Some strange object appeared on her signal halyards.

The gun-crews leaped from their lounging attitudes; the gun-pointers thrust their eyes into the rubber eye-pieces of the sights; orders were shouted that no one could understand, and on the bridge the red faced man bellowed—

"Troops below!"

The officer at the port gun was cursing horribly.

"The *Annie* says there's submarines to port," he remarked to the empty air. "Why in this and that doesn't she get out of the way so we can see them?"

The destroyers ran madly about like untrained setter pups when a gun is fired. You could almost hear them barking. Another bellow from the bridge:

"Get those —— —— soldiers below! Get 'em below!"

Ah, yes; but who was to get them below? At the first sound of that fearful siren the mess-line had come topside, not singly but in a body. If anything was going on, these men wanted to see it.

And particularly did they want to see a submarine. They had eaten and slept with the U boat uppermost in their minds for some time, and now if there was a chance to watch one at work, they wanted a front seat. It never occurred to them that their ship might be torpedoed.

Their officers were all at mess in the officers' quarters; and by the time they reached their stations the well-decks, both forward and aft, were jammed solid with troops. They thronged the rails and hung from the ladders like apes. Among them was the one-eyed man, who found himself at the rail beside Green, who had come out of the forecastle where he had been fixing lighting-cable.

"Where's the submarines?" demanded Green.

There were none to be seen, only the smooth sea, the far-off line of the coast and the destroyers madly chasing their tails. Some of the cooler heads began to edge

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away, thinking of the chow below all getting cold, and of their chance to get a good place near the head of the line. A wild clamor of voices from the *Annie*, a mad hubbub, then a sudden silence, a hush, that made the hair stand on end.

"What the ——" muttered everybody.

There was another cry from the other ship, a kind of snarl; then a long, white finger shot past her bow, a finger that lengthened and broadened and bore down on the other ships with fearsome speed. It had not cleared the *Annie's* bow by a foot, but it went by the next ship to starboard by a wide margin, to the accompaniment of wild yells, and then went hurrying off into the broad Atlantic.

"Was that a sub?" the soldiers queried of the calm-faced gobs that stood about the decks axe in hand.

"Torpedo," the sailors replied. "We're on for a hot time when they shoot 'em at us in broad daylight."

A strange sound came from the interior of the transport, a ghostly knocking as if some god of the deep were beating on the ship's bottom. It was disquieting. Some of the troops sought information again.

"'s all right," replied the flatfeet. "The noise is the destroyers droppin' depth bombs. They're puttin' down a ring around the convoy. Them Germans must have a whale of a fleet out there to tackle us in the face of all them destroyers. Maybe it's just one U boat, an' he's beat it by now."

All at once a great many things happened. They happened simultaneously; but as the conveying of impressions by the printed word is limited, the recounting of the events will take some time.

First, every one of the transports blew her siren with all possible steam and continued to blow it. Flags leaped from signal halyards, and semaphores began to chop. There was the far-off thud of a gun, probably one of the rearward ships firing at a periscope.

The watching troops were like the spectators at a football game, ready to cheer loudly for the success of their own side and observe the advance of their opponents with silence. The ships of the convoy behaved like a crowd of elderly females pursued by bad boys. They zigzagged thither and yon and screamed madly. How the transports and the rushing destroyers escaped running one another down was a mystery.

The gun-crews stood poised, eager, waiting for a ripple, a shadow, a V-shaped wave, any hint that there was a target for them to fire at.

To the northwest of the convoy, on what a sailor would call the port bow, appeared two sticks, rising suddenly from the deep.

"There he is!" cried the grandstand. "See him! See him!"

Bang! went the bow gun of the *Annie*. *Bang! Bang!* The leading transports helped out.

The destroyers swung in a wide circle and began to throw ash-cans overboard. The sticks still bobbed serenely up and down. The ships ceased firing for fear of hitting a destroyer with a ricochet, and a far-off rattle of machine-guns came down the wind, mingled with the bark of the destroyers' light guns.

Interest was at a fever heat. Every eye was watching the cluster of destroyers, and the convoy swung to starboard, away from danger. So intent was every one on the affair to port that a rapid firing of guns to starboard went on for some seconds before any one looked to see the reason. They saw, and never forgot.

THE destroyers had hurried to the other side of the convoy, and all the soldiers were watching them. But the gun-crews on the starboard side and the men on bridge and lookout, whose duty it was to watch to starboard continually, though all the Imperial German High Seas fleet should appear to port, perceived with startled eyes a procession of periscopes, a young forest of them, rise to starboard about half a mile away and then duck down again.

Firing began immediately. Shortly afterward, like eager serpents, the white wakes of torpedoes darted through the convoy. Each ship, when the signal "submarines to starboard" was flown and the shriek of the sirens began again, promptly changed her course, so that though the white snakes hissed and foamed dangerously near, none of the ships was struck.

The transports could do all in their power to escape being struck, but the destroyers must rush here and there regardless, their duty to protect and to destroy, and not to save themselves. One went surging down the center of the convoy just as one of those white arrows slipped under the stern of the single-stacker. A cry of horror from the fleet.

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The destroyer turned sharply to port, but it was plain that there was no escape.

The sailor at the depth-charge rack worked frantically, and the great cans rolled over one by one. The sound of the explosion was stunning; splinters, bits of steel and a little mannikin with dangling arms leaped high in air. Then the water fell back, revealing the destroyer down by the stern, and with a list to starboard. The torpedo had torn a hole in the stern, but the water-tight bulkheads would keep the ship afloat.

The man who had worked so rapidly at the ash cans was gone. He had stayed at his post in the face of certain death and dumped all the depth bombs overboard. If they had been in place when the torpedo struck, the force of the explosion would have detonated them, and there would not have been enough left of the destroyer to light a cigaret with. Moreover, the force of the double explosion would have knocked a hole in one of the transports anyway, if not more.

After the discharge of torpedoes there was a moment of quiet. Then the destroyers streaked out ahead and gathered about a spot in the ocean like dogs about a fox's den. The knocking on the transport's hull redoubled its vigor; then the destroyers turned about, licking their chops, and took up their stations again.

When the convoy passed over the spot where the destroyers had gathered, the men on the decks could see a great wide circle of oil, its slickness flashing and glittering in all the colors of the rainbow. Little bits of wood and pieces of mangled rope kept popping out of this circle of oil and floating lazily on the surface.

The one-eyed man, Green and some five or six hundred other men leaped suddenly back from the rail. Directly beneath them, almost near enough to scrape their noses, had appeared a cluster of periscopes, two of them, perhaps three, very close together, and under them a huge black something. Then they were gone.

There was a roar from the two ships that well-nigh drowned the sirens. The bow gun of the *Annie* swung to starboard, and the other ships to port. The flatfeet near Green spoke feelingly and at length of the *Annie*, for they could not fire for fear of hitting her.

The men at the *Annie's* gun could be seen wildly waving their arms. Perhaps they also had their opinions of their neighbor. The two bridges exchanged personalities by semaphore.

The periscopes appeared again on the transport's beam, at which the clamor increased; but the U boats' commander knew that as long as he was between the two ships he was safe, so he took a good look and then went out of sight as if yanked by some invisible hand. The eye in the end of that piece of pipe had seen death coming.

Eager, intent, merciless, its bow wave curving outward in great sheets, a destroyer swept between the two transports at express-train speed. CRASH! The one-eyed man and Green had opened their mouths to cheer; but in company with the rest of the cheering-section they caught their breaths as they felt the ship quiver under them. There was a distant clattering of pans, and the bang of doors.

The sailors began to chop at the lashings of the rafts and toss the rope ladders overside. So! They had got theirs at last! The U boat had landed a torpedo after all.

In the death-like hush a voice roared from the bridge—their old friend the red-faced man with his megaphone:

"Ahoy, that destroyer! Don't drop any more bombs so near this ship! Where the —— do you think you are?"

He would have added more, but the destroyer was too far away. It is doubtful if he was heard the first time, for another depth bomb was dropped that seemed to lift the transport's stern bodily out of the water, so that the red-faced man foamed at the mouth and semaphored a profane message to the flagship of the escort for all the convoy to read.

That was the end. The pursuing destroyer suddenly gave up the chase, and two others that had paralleled her course to starboard and port swung around lazily and lay rolling for a few moments, watching the oil patch widen and widen. Then they came back to the convoy again.

A long while the soldiers waited; but there were no further periscopes, and when the land was so close that they could make out the long line of dunes, glistening in the sun, they went down to dinner. Then indeed was confusion, for those who already had their mess-kits started to push and shove for positions in the line, and those who had not theirs must needs force a way through

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the choked aisles to their bunks to get them.

The one-eyed man, it will be remembered, had been one of those who had come topside with his mess-kit in his hand, but he was unfortunate enough to be squeezed out of the doorway and forced to get in that part of the line that was above decks.

As the line moved to the door in the alleyway the one-eyed man gasped with astonishment, for the Plumber sat on the steel foot-board that ran around the fore hatch. On his wide face was a look of indescribable comfort, a peace that passed all understanding. He pulled at his ancient pipe and spat between his teeth where the gap was and looked at the shoving mess-line as if he were above such childish things.

"How come?" hailed the one-eyed man. "Did the U boats spoil your appetite?"

"What U boats?" asked the Plumber.

"What U boats!" mocked the crowd. "Didn't you see 'em?"

"No, I didn't see no U boats. What are you talkin' about?"

"Where were you," asked the one-eyed man, "that you didn't know we was attacked by all the subs in this part of the pond?"

"Oh," said the Plumber, "so that's what happened. I was down below, about five or six from the head of the chow line, when all that whistlin' begun. Some of the men went on deck, but thinks I, I'm near enough the head of the line to maybe get seconds, so I didn't want to lose my place.

"Then the whistles kept screechin', and everybody, K. P.'s and all, beat it, so I just stepped up to them pans and helped myself to a hearty meal. And I will say this; that it's the first one I've had since I was in the Army."

A·BORDER·RAID

By F. St. Mars

Author of "The Three Eggs," "The Desperado," etc.

IT IS not a good thing to dismiss a wild-beast tamer without reason given. More especially was it not a good thing to dismiss Marcus Payne from Wombat's traveling menagerie. Marcus cherished revenge and got it. He was what is technically called "fired out" publicly at three o'clock upon an afternoon. At three o'clock the next morning he returned, and the return of Marcus was a private and secret affair concerning only himself, and Fangs, the big gray wolf, who lived in the first cage on the left as you enter the menagerie.

No man saw the coming of Marcus, nor did they behold the going of him. But they found Fangs' cage-door open three hours later, and the cage was empty.

Once outside the cage, Fangs removed over the silent fields, a lean, gaunt, slouching specter in the moonlight. He went at a gallop, and there is no gait like unto the gallop of a wolf, for it never tires, and the animal that it cannot run down in the end is not yet born.

He sought the hills, the eternal, solemn hills, that he could see, girt with woods, blurring the distance. And a fox, hurrying

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upon private and unlawful affairs of his own, swung about to watch this loose-limbed giant sliding into the haze.

It was unfortunate that Fangs should have come upon a certain little field, tucked away among the outposts of the hills, for the field was sparsely populated by one white cow and a calf. Indeed, he was even half-way across the field before he became aware of the cow at all—a white avalanche bearing down upon him.

The charge of a cow afflicted with a calf is nothing to laugh at, yet Fangs lifted his lean upper lip in a grin that was evil. He had the advantage of the cow, for he knew what special kind of trouble he was facing, had been there before, so to speak. The cow, on the other hand, took him for a big dog, though since all mother-animals are mad, had he been a lion she would have acted just the same.

What followed was curious.

It seemed as if the charging cow had overwhelmed Fangs in the first rush, yet when he squirmed out from under her flying hoofs he was not even scratched. The squirming out, and the single chopping bite that followed, seemed to be one motion. No human eye could have followed it. Instantly the cow sprang clean into the air as if she had been shot. She had not, but there was a wound on her flank terrible to behold—and the death-cry of the calf sounded from the other end of the field; though how on earth Fangs had got there in the few seconds allowed him was past human knowledge.

Thus it is to be a wolf, with the speed, agility, and fiendish cunning of a wolf. One might add also, the suspicious nature, for—ah!

Just as the gray of dawn showed, Fangs had quite suddenly, and without any apparent reason, turned into a rigid image, as if sculptured in gray marble. Only his sharp, thrust-out nose moved, twitched spasmodically to the sound of long, indrawn breaths. The air tells many secrets to those with the nose to smell, and Fangs smelled man.

He had no love for man. In fact, he was able to connect most of the trouble in his life with him; for it had been a wild life involving many appalling escapes, famine, murder, and all other horrors.

Therefore Fangs removed through the hedge, and five minutes later a stupefied farmer was scratching his head beside his half-mad cow and the dead calf.

He had rather a fine collie dog, had that farmer. At the moment it was ranging the hedges round about for stray rabbits, or something else. To judge by the sudden, agonized howl that broke from the other side of the hedge a minute later, startling the farmer out of his senses and his swearing, it had found not the rabbit, but something else. As a matter of fact it had found Fangs, lying flat in a ditch awaiting developments.

Instantly there was a snap, a snarl and a rush, and Fangs, pivoting on his hind legs, went away in a hurry. Of course the dog was not to blame. He did not know that a wolf at his ease, and a wolf close-pressed, are not quite the same animal. The strange beast ran away, and he was quite unaware of the inadvisability of chasing a fleeing wolf alone. Indeed, he only found it out when, presuming on his greater knowledge of the ground, he cut Fangs off in a corner of the field.

The wolf had to choose between a ten-foot holly-hedge and the collie. To judge by the worried-looking, blood-spattered, furred apology that answered the farmer's frantic calls a minute later, one presumes that he had chosen the collie. Anyway, he was not there when the farmer looked, and there was no gap in the hedge, while the collie appeared to be all gaps.

The wolf invited himself into the hills forthwith, painfully conscious of the growing light and of the pressing need of a hiding-place. He had no desire to be discovered in the open.

A fox's earth in the dim, cathedral silence of a pine-wood, where the pheasants and the woodcocks dreamed of nesting, and the jays screeched their diabolical, nutmeg-grater screech the day-long, offered possibilities. It smelled abominably, that den, and there was strong and unclean evidence of the rightful owner having dined there more than once.

The wolf, however, was no faddist, nor was he what one may term specially hygienic. He went within and slept, and the fox, which came home to the place later, went away again on tiptoe, so to say, and in a hurry. Fangs had opened one eye only, and said, "Gr-r-r!" which laconic remark closed, as well as opened, the interview.

It was about the time of bats and owls, the still time, the sad time, when the mist

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grows upon the air, and the red-eyed day is, as it were, tucking himself up for the night, that Fangs awoke. As is the custom with all the wild creatures, he was fully awake in an instant and, as is also their custom, he must needs wash himself from head to foot before doing anything else. Those who are not clean in the wild die swiftly—it is a law, and one does not break laws with Death on the seat of justice.

Fangs did not issue forth at once. Those whose lives are spent with a price upon their heads are no takers of chances. He set that marvelous combination—his eyes, nose and ears—at work for the space of ten minutes, with his head at the mouth of the hole.

There his eyes—those horrible, filmy, green optics of all dogs as they appear in the dark—could be plainly seen, burning dully.

Fangs passed from the mouth of the hole and faded out among the trees. He moved circumspectly, for he knew what kind of trouble follows the killing of cattle even in Texas, and who could tell what might happen in this new land?

It was well that he did so, for, as he topped a rise of chocolate-colored plowland a few minutes later, something happened. There came a splash of flame against the black pall of the wood behind him, and a bullet spat earth up into his eyes. Afterward, followed the clean, snapping report of a rifle, and the wolf moved from one end of that field to the other like a streak.

The hue and cry over that little matter of the calf had been raised already, then? They had not been long, these men of this shaven and shorn land. If he felt any doubt at all about the matter it was removed an hour later.

Passing through an apology for a wood, that appeared to be given over to the pheasants by day and rats by night, he came upon a cat. It was in trouble, that cat, and it was mumbling strange oaths to itself, yammering and moaning, and running round in circles. Fangs stopped and stiffened, the hair lifting along his back. Cats always affected him that way, whether lynx, puma, or common "tabby."

He was wondering if the thing were really mad, or only put out, which with a cat is very much the same thing, when his eye lighted upon a calf's head. He knew that calf's head, had seen it before; the glassy stare of the dead eyes seemed strangely familiar. Seeing that that head belonged to the calf he had killed that morning this recognition was nothing to wonder at.

For a space he stood looking from the pathetic trophy to the cat, and back again, and as he looked suspicion flashed into his eyes. His ears flattened, his fur bristled, his lean upper lip lifted, revealing the gleaming white weapons beneath.

Then he moved stiffly, as one who has "rheumatics," to the head, and sniffed it. One sniff he took, and it was quite sufficient. The head smelled of poison, and he knew, such was his conscience, that the poison was for his benefit, not the cat's. He was sorry for that cat, but he was also anxious to retire into the next county. He did. In fact, he shed fifteen miles behind his bushy tail before he stopped.

Sitting under the shade of a giant oak-tree for a "breather" he became suddenly aware of a shadow drifting across the open. It reminded him of a hunger in his inside. The shadow seemed to offer possibilities. It did, but not quite in the manner he expected.

No English fox would have attempted a stalk across the open in that glaring stark moonlight. But an English fox is one kind of villain, a gray wolf another. The fox, for instance, would not have known poison when he smelled it. On the other hand, the men where Fangs came from had long ago given up poison for useless as a remover of wolves.

Fangs literally seemed to sink into the earth, and his method of screwing across the open on his belly was no small marvel. He had a hundred yards to cover between the tree and the hare, which beast had stopped to dance with its own shadow or something equally fantastic; an uncanny sight, by the way, when distorted and mocked by the cynical moon.

The program of that crazy stalk resolved itself somewhat as follows: Dance hare, and slide forward of wolf; pause hare to sit up and gaze round, and flattening of wolf in immobility. It is questionable if that hare, who must assuredly have been mad, saw his foe at all till that foe rose literally out of the ground ten yards away.

Then things happened.

If you have ever taken a hare by surprize you will understand the meaning of the word speed. It was not so much that

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the animal departed as the fact that he was gone—and Fangs went with him. The one wonder was no whit less than the other.

They streaked across the face of that field at a pace that made one shudder to think what would happen if they collided with anything. They did not, however, though how in the name of all that's miraculous they negotiated the hedges, was a puzzle. No human eye could have told if they went through, or over, or under them. All that is certain is that they did accomplish the magic somehow, and continued to accomplish it for the space of exactly fifteen minutes.

At the end of this time the hare lay down and died, quite quietly, and without saying anything at all. His heart had burst, I fancy. This is just as well, perhaps, for Fangs was incapable of slaughtering even a mouse at the end. He just stopped beside his supper and gasped.

What reason he had for pressing the hare in such a wild fashion, when he must have known quite well that he could run down any hare that lived, sooner or later, at his tireless wolf-gallop, is not quite apparent. Perhaps he was mad with hunger or maybe he had a fear of being found in the open in this new land. Who knows?

An hour before dawn he sought him a hiding-place, and as the gray badgers rolled home to their dens in the innermost secret places of the woods, the wolf's brush disappeared for the second time into a fox's earth. The badgers are always far and away the latest of the night hunters to appear and the earliest to retire. In that perhaps lies the secret of their survival. And the wolf also apparently had learned the wisdom.

Later came a polecat, and the wolf drew in his nose from the mouth of the hole as the long, low, evil-visaged slayer went by. The smell of a polecat is appalling.

Once a great blotch of shadow drifted by beneath the trees; that was a red deer. Once a smaller shape—surely it was the spirit of the woods, that shape—with eyes shining like twin stars, appeared to blow past, and that was a roe-deer. And once, just as the first, steel-cold glint of dawn touched the scarred tree-trunks, a man and a lean dog, furtive and slouching, came that way, returning, like the beasts, to their lair; and, like many of the beasts also, they were poachers.

A pheasant crowed, a jay screeched, and lo! 'twas day.

Then, quite suddenly, two crows, carrion crows, who had been, for reasons clear enough, roosting in a tall fir above the fox's earth, awoke. Yea, in the face of an angry red sun, these blatant, black and vulgar villains awoke, and descending to a lower bough, danced a crazy dance, calling out the while in a harsh voice:

"You can't! You can't! You can't!"

Fangs cocked one ear, and thrust a tentative sharp muzzle out of the "earth," with the evident intention of finding out who was the person that couldn't. He knew that crows and trouble go about hand in hand. Therefore he became about as sensitive as the receiver of a wireless apparatus. And the crows continued to dance their unholy dance, and to croak strange things in an unknown tongue.

Five minutes passed, and Fangs was just beginning to think that the crows were mad or poisoned, when suddenly he scrambled to his feet and swore through his fangs—an evil, snarling swear.

There was a thing coming through the wood, walking toward him, or hopping rather, out of the fiery cauldron of the sun. This thing was a one-eared, mangy, three-legged—a trap knew what had happened to the fourth leg—disreputable, out-at-heels old fox. He held something in his jaws, and it needed not the red glare of the sun to turn crimson that which he held in his jaws. It was the half of a lamb. Without being told, both wolf and crows could make a pretty correct guess where the other half was. The fox carried that also.

And all the wild folk crouched and trembled as they looked, or slid away at sight of this outrage. Well they knew the unwisdom of tampering with man's belongings, and had no wish to be there when the reckoning was taken.

The fox came straight on, straight, that is, save when he stopped to glance uneasily over his shoulder, which he did pretty often. Arrived at the mouth of the hole he stopped again, but this was not to glance over his shoulder—he stared straight in front of him into the black well of the interior, and there stole into his wicked, leering eyes a look of sheer stupefaction. There was a grin on his face still, indeed there always is on the "mask" of a fox, but the grin was without joy.

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For a space he stood rigid, his one ear cocked back—he was evidently afraid to take his eyes off the "earth"—and that which he heard must have been no ordinary sound, for he deliberately disappeared into the "earth."

He was met by a flashing line of glistening white fangs. Something said, "G-r-r-r!" in his one remaining ear, and a two-inch strip of his rufous fur flew into the air. Then he removed two yards in exactly two and a half seconds.

Afterward when well out in the open air, he ruefully regarded a neat, raw gash on his left shoulder. The sound as of crunching came up to him out of the "earth," and he sighed, as only a fox can, because he had left the half of the lamb in there with his strip of fur, and he knew what the crunching meant.

White shows very far against green and brown. That is why so few of the wild folk wear it. It is also the reason that caused Fangs to stop eating the lamb and the crows to cease their mad antics above. They had all three spotted at the same moment a parti-colored blotch, that came and went among the tree-trunks, and came again.

Ten seconds later there were three such patches, then six, then eight.

The fox was sitting with his back to them. If he had not been thus prevented from seeing them, he would not have remained two seconds. And all the time the white and brown and black splashes increased, and bobbed about ever nearer among the ranked and serried tree-boles. When he did see them he went off like a rocket. He knew foxhounds when he saw them, and every time. He just slicked off into nowhere and the crows became scarce, and Fangs bolted the remainder of the lamb whole.

Whether Fangs found the "earth" too small for concealment, or whether he was suddenly attacked by panic is not quite certain. The hounds had been brought post-haste because of the slaying of the lamb. At the moment Fangs made up his mind to bolt, the huntsman and two or three gentlemen were walking their horses along the edge of the wood. They heard a sudden terrific burst of "music," a wild scurry, an appalling yell from one of the hounds, and then a fresh and savage burst of "music." Then it seemed to them that a great, gray shadow blew from the wood and melted over a hedge.

A few minutes later the huntsman was off his horse, swearing strange oaths over the mangled carcass of one of his best hounds, which lay just a little way in under the trees.

Thus the hunt began, and Fangs, sailing at his loose, tireless gallop over the rolling hills, ran clean into the distance and was no more seen.

THAT night, in the long interval of silent blackness, before the moon, the stillness of a certain wood was outraged quite suddenly by a sound that was—well, no words can express it. Melancholy, desolation, regret, cruelty, terror, and an everlasting misery were expressed in that sound. It was a howl, long-drawn and malignant, and there is no sound quite like it in all the world, the howl of a lonely wolf.

It trailed through the blackness to the ears of a man, a keeper, who was also a volunteer, and who had traveled a little. He stopped dead as if he had been shot.

"Great heavens!" he gasped.

Ten minutes later he entered the parlor of his cottage and reached down his Lee-Enfield military magazine-rifle, slipped some .303 cartridges into his pocket, and stepped back into the night.

Fangs sat on his haunches howling dismally for a space. He was lonely. More especially he was hungry. Hence the fiendish sounds. Anon he departed with his peculiar, loose stride, and fell among things in the darkness—it was black as the pit in that wood—and they fled all whither. At least they all fled save one, and that one stayed. It had to. Fangs had fallen upon it like a bolt, and the thing, which was a rabbit, departed this life swiftly.

Later, when the languid moon came out and washed the world in a tantalizing half-light, Fangs stole forth. He came to a field, a big field dotted with dark heaps, which might have been bushes if they had not caught his wind and huddled together like cattle—which they were.

Fangs reconnoitered from the hedge. There were some green plover in the field, he could see their white breasts, when they turned in the moonlight, gleam like silver splashes. There were also other splashes, white against the shadow of the hedge, which he knew to be the tails of rabbits. And a thing looking like a gigantic white

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moth flickered up and down as silently as a wraith. It was a barn-owl.

From time to time things rustled up the hedge, fell over him, or almost did so, and rustled away again in a hurry. One of the things was a hedgehog. This he knew, because it pricked him most abominably on the snout when he snapped at it, with that peculiar viciousness of wolves when they are uneasy. The other things were probably brown rats, field voles, and others of the rodent tribe—the tribe that is accursed.

What followed was not on the program, I fancy. At least, it was not on the program of the keeper, lying flat in the hedge fifty yards to leeward, hugging his rifle fondly.

Fangs danced out to the snorting, shoving, crowding, wide-eyed cattle as if he were on springs, sailed round them once or twice seeking a spot where there was something more profitable to take hold of than horns, and fell to work. And the lone call of the green plover still broke over the field, and the owl continued to interview the rats, and to snore and squawk, just for all the world as if nothing unusual were happening. And a hare limped out into the field, and, suddenly grasping the situation, retired like a brown projectile. And for the life of him the foresight of the keeper's rifle would not come to attention upon the wolf's body.

To do them justice, considering that wolves were not part of their daily troubles, and never had been, those cattle fought proudly. But a hungry gray wolf is many kinds of an ugly, agile proposition. Once—twice—thrice he got home with his sidelong, chopping stroke. And each time he removed a clean piece out of some heaving flank as large as a child's hand.

Suddenly he cut off a young bull. Headed him from the herd, flew at his throat, and—a splash of flame; a short, coughing, butting report, and an odd sound which can only be written "*phit*"—the sound of a bullet meeting flesh.

The bull collapsed. Fangs stood for a moment staring at it, lay down, got up again, turned round, regarded the hedge where the shot had come from in an odd, surprized sort of way, lay down again, sighed, and was still. He never rose after that. He had obtained his freedom—from life and forever.

And in the silence that followed could be heard a subdued cough, and the metallic snick, draw-back and snap such as is made by ejecting an empty cartridge-case, and closing the breech of a military magazine-rifle.

"I reckon," said the keeper, "that I've got a bull's eye this time."

He had, but not quite the kind that he meant, for he had shot the young bull clean through the head as well as the wolf. Funny toys, modern rifles.

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LAW

by G. W. Barrington

WHEN 'Lige Martin's red-bone hound ran out at Dan Simmons, Danny shot the animal squarely between the eyes.

'Lige sought to avenge the dog, as any man of parts ought to do in such circumstances, so Danny shot 'Lige squarely between the eyes, too.

To maintain the proper sequence of events, Ol' Man Pound, 'Lige's father-in-law, came out on the back gallery of the Martin domicile, with a squirrel-rifle in hand, so Danny got down to fine shooting, and slapped a bullet neatly into the doddering patriarch's gun-hand, then nicked him twice more as he was beating back to safety—barely creasing him on each thigh—to prove that the animated target reached safety through sufferance of an adversary who could shoot.

Each of the three having done a man's part, nothing more of an exciting nature appeared to be in prospect, so Danny left the dog curled grotesquely against the fence, left Ol' Man Pound groaning and swearing inside the cabin, left 'Lige sprawled between two cotton rows, and went on up the big road to town to get his mail and buy some coffee and snuff.

SOLID, stolid, grizzled and gray-blue-eyed Bob Forrest, sheriff of Seminole County, Texas, reached the flatwood country shortly after dawn of the next morning, after a thirty-five-mile ride through the drizzle.

Passing the Simmons cabin, he saw the widow come out on the porch, raise a gaunt arm to protect her old eyes against the glare of a burning after-the-shower sun, and stalk back into the house. As the sheriff jogged by, Harry Simmons, Danny's younger brother, a shock-head in his 'teens, peered furtively from the log crib, then went on husking out corn for the day's feed.

That was enough, for, had Danny been at home waiting for the law to clutch him, he would have stepped out like a man, and allowed the ceremonies to go on.

At the Martin cabin, Forrest hooked one ponderous leg over the saddle-horn and listened unperturbed to the querulous complainings of Ol' Man Pound, and the whimpered lamentations of the new-made widow.

Not a dozen words spoke the sheriff. There lay the dog; there lay 'Lige; there lay Ol' Man Pound, none in better condition than when Dan Simmons had finished with them. What need for lengthy interrogation of the survivor or solemn indictment of the accused?

Some things the sheriff noted, chief of which was that there was not a neighbor on the place. Dr. Brookheart had come and gone, having bent his skill to the repairment of the wounded. The undertaker had answered to the call of duty, and the sexton was digging industriously in the Hill cemetery over the way. That was all.

Sheriff Bob knew his people. For thirty years he had served them as peace officer,

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having become successively constable, deputy-sheriff and finally sheriff. The "piney" and its philosophy was an open book to him.

He knew Dan Simmons as a citizen fully up to the standard in that vicinity, which meant that Dan always had been wont to respect such laws as met with the approval of the piney-wood folk—and no more.

A small farmer, Simmons worked his lean acres industriously, supported his household in comfort, properly respected the property rights of his neighbors, and paid every dollar that he ever owed, which was all that any man need do to earn recognition as a square man and a good neighbor.

But, when the livestock sanitary commission notified him to dip his cattle, or the game warden warned against early shooting, Dan heeded not. The flat had its own ideas about what should and what should not be done with its resources, and was resentful of outside interference with its provincial arrangements.

Whose cattle were these, anyway? Who raised the quails? If a man wants to still a little "likker" or set a fish-trap, how does that injure any outlander? What call has the legislature or Congress or the Volsteaders to reach away down into the deep timber and inflict rules and regulations and statutes upon people who never go outside their own fief to inflict their sociological ideas upon other folk?

That was the neighborhood atmosphere, and Dan Simmons had breathed it in when his infant lungs first filled, to which extent, and no more, he was an outlaw, though by no means an outcast.

All of it was obvious. Dan Simmons had killed a man, and the neighbors approved the act, because 'Lige Martin had done something wrong—not unlawful, but just wrong.

"No use to stay here, let's try the town," the sheriff decided.

A quarter of a mile on up the big road he encountered "Grandpa" Bobbitt.

" 'Lo, dad!"

" 'Lo, sher'ff!"

Then Bobbitt rode sedately on, giving unwonted attention to the guidance of the lean sorrel, which for a decade had carried him by day and by night through woods and over hills, but now appeared much in need of careful prompting.

Very evidently Grandpa Bobbitt had nothing on his mind which he craved to impart.

Farther on men waved from barnyards and wood-lots, but none came to the fence to gossip or to shout the usual invitation to "climb down and hitch."

In town the sheriff encountered groups which melted away upon his appearance, and met cronies who passed by hurriedly on the other side. Here and there he secured contact with an individual, to drop a word and pick up one where he could. With his shrewd old eyes on every man's face, and his eager ears drinking in every syllable spoken in his presence, he gathered the story bit by bit, all of it incompetent and immaterial, as any court would rule, but "the best evidence," simply because it was the best that Bob Forrest, or any one else, could have procured.

By midafternoon, the sheriff knew that there was a still on the State land back of the Simmons farm, and that all of the neighbors had known of it for months, particularly 'Lige Martin. A short time back, federal officers had swooped down from Tyler, stopping at the Martin farm to pick up 'Lige, who had piloted them to the edge of the State land, and there left them. Fred Bascomb had seen this, and cut lickety-split across Devil's Bayou and through the old timber cutting, speeding to such good purpose that when the officers arrived at the scene of illicit operations they found the remains of a pine-knot fire, a distinct odor of mash in the air, and that was all. When they stormed the Simmons castle, they found Dan nonchalantly scraping a coon-hide, which commonplace task he continued to pursue most painstakingly and in silence while they bombarded him with futile questions and bullied him with as near an approach to the third degree as any man dare essay in the piney.

All right then, Bob Forrest's work lay ahead of him. From the Neches, five miles on his right, to the Angelina, eight miles to his left, lay the flatwood, a wilderness of pine and oak and gum and hickory, with tangled vines and screening bushes, and a carpet of dead needles and fallen leaves—model refuge for a hunted man, with its maze of crisscrossed pig-trails and net-work of branches and swales, each apparently beginning in nothingness and ending not at all.

Here and there was a clearing, with the

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inevitable log house and its ever-present mud-and-stick chimney, and from them meandered toward town log roads and foot-paths, each as familiar to the pineyfolk as Main Street is to a villager, but to the novice in woodcraft only tending to confuse with their apparently purposeless doublings and twistings.

Somewhere out there, was Dan Simmons, lean-loined, dark-haired, with his knife-like face and woodsman's faculties, his subtle mind bearing a map of the district, with every danger-point and every sanctuary plainly marked.

Though beset by a thousand fiends and trailed by a million man-hounds, Dan would cling to the flat. A fox may lead the pack in a wide sweep, but he always will return to the neighborhood of his den. In addition, there was a lithe, winsome, snub-nosed girl in gingham over on Hickory Ridge. Never had Dan Simmons been fifty miles from her; never would he be so long as he remained master of his movements.

In a similar predicament, an outlander sheriff would have ballyhooed for a posse, and beaten the thickets to no purpose.

A city sleuth would have sought a stool-pigeon—and found none.

Sheriff Bob twitched the reins significantly over old Dick, raked him lightly with a rowel, and settled him into a fox-trot for the county seat, where he reported that 'Lige Martin and Dan Simmons had gotten into trouble over a dog and Dan had shot 'Lige and was "layin' out;" and further the deponent sayeth not, for what Bob Forrest knew of the still and the fiasco over on the State land were mere trickles of rumor which had come to him from men who "had heered" this, or "reckoned" that, or " 'lowed" thus and so.

TWO weeks later Prosecutor Colson sat in his office at the court-house, and with him sat the district enforcement officer, flanked by two deputies.

In response to their joint summons, Sheriff Bob ambled slowly in and eased his squat figure into an office chair with accustomed humility and unobtrusiveness.

"Bob," said the attorney, cutting straight to the heart of things, "Delaney here is disappointed that we have not yet brought Dan Simmons in. In his opinion Simmons is guilty of making liquor, and he has killed a man, supposibly because he suspected the deceased of having been a informer."

"Facts is facts, an' opinions is opinions," sagely drawled the sheriff. "Them two had trouble over a dawg, an' it wound up in a shootin'. Like as not they was hard feelin's over somethin' else. Mebbe so.

"Howsomever, the grand jury indicted Danny, an' I hev a warrant for 'im. Reckon I'll git him arter a spell. When I do, you 'n' these fellers kin make your charges. I don't know nothin' about this here still business."

"Of course you are correct about that," said the attorney easily, "but Delaney says that the department insists that Simmons be prosecuted at once, as an object lesson to other offenders, so he and his deputies are going down there after him tomorrow night, and they wish you to go along."

"You see, sheriff," cut in Delaney, "we have figured it out that this man gets advance information of our goings and comings on the highway, so we plan to drive down to the river tomorrow evening after dusk, then go through the wood on foot and come out at the Simmons place, about midnight.

"Coming from that direction, we ought to surround the premises before they know we are after 'em. You know the trails, and, of course, we depend upon you to head the expedition."

"Don't reckon you kin ketch Danny jist thataway. In the fust place, he won't be at home unless he *knows* where you all are, 'n' besides you mout git through the flat 'thout 'm larnin' of it, and agin you moutn't; 'tany rate, I don't 'low to go along, 'cause when I start arter a man I like to fetch 'im in, an' I don't calk'late you will git Danny thataway.

"Luke Haskell's the best deputy I ever had, 'n' he knows the trails 's well's I do. I'll send 'im along, but I 'low to go arter Danny my own way when I git ready." Then with an irrepressible twinkle of scorn in his deep-set eyes—

"Barrin', of course, you fellers dont ketch 'im fust."

EIGHT o'clock on the bottom road. Five men walking silently in file. Luke Haskell leading. Log road to the right for a mile, then winding trail into the heart of the piney. Branches whip from overhead; dewberry vines snare the path. Frogs croaking off to left. Eagle Lake.

A light leaps suddenly out across tottering rail-fences. The Jones farm. Old Dave and

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the boys still choring, with Mother Jones stirring about in the kitchen. Detour.

Low-eaved house looms suddenly in small clearing. The Bobbitts. Go right ahead; lights all out, and old people sleep soundly. Half-way through now. This is the way to catch Dan Simmons.

Another half-hour. The Bailey farmstead. Too far for them to see or hear, so keep the path. The Bailey dog charges across the cotton patch raising a clamor that would have awakened a sleep-drunken sailor thirty-six hours ashore. Never mind; they'll think he is baying stock.

From Luke in a suppressed bellow:

"Who 'n —— lit that there cigaret? Put it out, man! Quick, I tell you!"

A window rasps over at the house. Somebody talking. The dog hushes suddenly—too suddenly, somebody has ordered him back. On ahead the rail-fence creaks a senile protest as somebody crawls over it. The woods are full of somebodies.

Fifty feet up the path a match crackles, and a pine torch flares suddenly: Bailey the elder, with an urchin of undeterminable age, wearing pants several sizes too large precariously festooned about his nimble shanks and sustained by suspenders which have "Dad's old ones" stamped all over them.

Bailey the elder sure is surprized to see Luke and the other fellows. Heard the dog and thought stock had broken in. Awkwardly enough he drops the torch and when it has been relighted, the discovery is made that the boy is missing.

"Drat that young'un."

Two minutes, and the long-drawn *o-o-o-ah!* of a cow-horn sounds back at the house. The young'un made it all right.

Bailey the elder invites them to come in and warm, to get some coffee, to stay all night, to borrow a team. All right then, he'll light 'em to the branch, which he does without once asking them what they are doing out, or where they are going. Ominous.

Another quarter down the trail. A cow-horn sounds loud off to the left. Wes Churchill doing his bit. Never mind; may make it yet. It can't be more than another mile. Trot boys; there's still a chance for Danny.

Out of a gully comes Lem Whitaker and the Underwood boys. There is no kind or size of dog that isn't with them. Hunting, they say, but Lem's nightshirt shows when his coat blows open. Men don't hunt in nightshirts very often, and never when night air is laden with frost, and ice is forming about the drifts in turbid branches. They appear to have struck game, though, for no sooner do the five file past than a most unprecedented bombardment breaks out behind them and every mutt in the pack opens in discordant yammering.

Hear that, now! From the far tip of Hickory Ridge sounds the brazen clangor of district-school bell, a breathless, disheveled gingham girl swinging on the rope with briar-torn hands.

"I'm all done," announces Luke Haskell. "You fellows can go ahead with this dern foolishness if you want to. When you catch Dan Simmons, I'll chuck my star at a toad-frog, an' go to preachin' for a livin'. See you at the car."

And the fellows did go ahead with their dern foolishness, surrounding and searching the Simmons cabin from ridge to underpinning, likewise the outbuildings and fields, and finally the thicket over on the State land, where a still warm bed of coals and a pungent odor of mash bespoke another warm trail, with disappointment as a reward of honest service.

Young Harry Simmons silently piloted the weary ones back to the car, through a gauntlet of soughing horns and clamoring bells which marked their progress across the flatwood as certainly as a military band leads a parade—and as purposefully.

FIVE o'clock in the Simmons kitchen. Ma hovering about the yawning maw of the open fireplace, her wizened face glowing in the gleam like the visage of a witch at her brewing.

Green log at back; cherry-red embers in front. Bailed coffee-pot sending aromatic steam eddying up soot-encrusted chimney. Real country sausages, symphonies in sage and pork and condiments—brown rafts a-swim in a sea of their own fragrant ooze.

Ma baking flapjacks. Over the smoking griddle goes a pork rind, sizzling on the prongs of a steel fork. Batter flows on smoothly, gradually evolving into flaky golden disks—poems written with flour and meal and sour milk and soda and baking-powder. Creating flapjacks is an art and a ceremony.

Butter, apple sauce, cane sirup, tomato preserves, salt-brine pickles, with plates for

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three resting in anticipation on the red-and-black checkered oilcloth.

Plates for three, mind you, for Ma knows as surely as she is Ma that Danny will come in for breakfast. Why not, with every bell and horn in the neighborhood cheerily singing of respite for the fugitive, and Harry along to bring warning by relayed cow-horn message in case any foeman should double back?

Danny comes, unconcerned, matter-of-fact, undemonstrative.

"Harry went with 'em, eh?"

"Yes, son."

"Fire feels good."

" 'Speck so. Git into some dry duds, an' we'll set up an' eat. Flapjacks an' sausage ort to taste good, after rantin' aroun' in the timber on a night like this."

First Dan cleaned his beloved rifle, replaced the cartridges, and rested the piece on two pegs over the mantel. Dressed and washed, he went to table and proceeded to pay reverent, though noisy, devotion to mother's provender.

A step on the porch. Harry, of course.

"This coffee sure does touch the spot. Pass the——"

In the doorway, grim old Bob Forrest, bedraggled, unkempt, mud from heel to crotch, a sodden viking with six-gun in hand, and the glint of victory in his eye.

"Steady, Danny," as Simmons' worried glance strayed toward the precious rifle, "reckon you got too much sense to go against a shore thing an' this is a shore thing. Sorry Mom, to disturb you, an' hope Danny will come out all clear, which he may, with all the neighbors on his side, an' 'Lige clean off down there by the road an' a gun in his hand.

"Reckon we mout as well saddle an' ride."

Eve has been accused of having tempted Adam, and since then several billions of women, white, black, red and yellow, have been temptresses.

The flower-faced, long-lashed, lithe-bodied regal beauty in ballroom or salon has her weapons; Ma Simmons had hers.

Coolly she strode to the fireplace, her every movement watched closely by the wary officer. Carefully she lifted the coffee-pot that the grounds might not be "riled"; reverently she bore it to table and poured a generous cup of the steaming amber nectar right where the man-seducing odor would be certain to assail the sheriff's nostrils.

"Law or no law, warrant or no warrant, a body hez t' eat. Set up, an' hev a bite—" giving the butter plate a hospitable shove —"I'll hev some hot cakes ready in two shakes."'

Sheriff Bob was tempted, sorely tempted, and, like many another good man, Bob Forrest weakened.

First, the sheriff took Dan's rifle off the pegs, pumped it empty, and laid it on the floor behind him. Then he sat down opposite Dan, unbuckling his belt and laying it across his chair so that the holster would remain near his hip.

"Shore do need a little fillin' right now," he admitted, deftly possessing himself of a cake and buttering it generously. "Rid down to this end yest'dy evenin' knowin' them federalists 'ud make a bust of it, an' s'posin' you'd come in 's soon 's they was gone. Laid back yonder in the timber all night, an' she shore was cold. See'd your kid brother goin' along 'th them. Hope he don't try no rukus when he comes back."

By way of answer, Dan took another batter cake and another sausage, and the officer did likewise.

More batter cakes, more sausages, apple sauce, preserves, quarts of coffee, slabs of golden butter. Luke and the federalists going home empty-handed; Danny to be brought in later by the old sheriff whose methods had been flouted. Pretty good, but hard on Danny, though no jury ever will hang that boy. Better go now, hear the kid coming; no use to have a run-in.

A cartridge belt with holster sustains a six-gun in proper position when buckled snugly around the waist of its owner. It also serves satisfactorily draped across one's chair, with the holster still convenient.

But, to be technically correct, before resuming the belt, once it has been doffed in the face of the enemy, one should remove the gun first, and place it within easy reach during the buckling-on process.

Perhaps it was the coffee, perhaps the quadruple ration of cakes and sausages, that caused Sheriff Bob's mind to lag while digestive processes gained impetus.

At any rate, the officer rose sluggishly, a belt clasp in either hand. In two seconds, the clasps would have been hooked, and the armament in place, but during those two seconds, Danny vaulted the table, Ma emptied the contents of the cream pitcher into the officer's face, and Harry opened the

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door and made a plunging tackle for the sheriff's legs.

Fighting mad on the instant, the sheriff released the right-hand clasp and made a futile flying grab for the weapon, which immediately swung downward and backward, right into the lad's face.

Old muscles tensed, young sinews strained, and the four rolled under the table, with old Bob underneath, and Harry boring the weapon into the pit of the sheriff's overstuffed paunch.

Chivalry has no preferred habitat, magnanimity lives in the piney. The instant the fallen one lay still in token of surrender, Ma disentangled her bony fingers from the officer's mane, Dan released his throttlehold, and Harry's berserk look faded. He handed the pistol to the rising Forrest.

Harry saddled a horse, Ma presented a stirrup cup of boiling Rio, and Dan, unarmed and stocking-footed, waved friendly good-by from the gallery: The code.

Of course, as a matter of law, Forrest could have shot Danny off the gallery, or dragged him off to jail at his horse's rump; but, on the other hand, Dan might have held his death grip, Ma might have used the skillet of hot grease instead of the cream pitcher, or Harry might have pulled that trigger.

—— the law! What's right between man and man?

SIX days of inactivity at the sheriff's office, and placid fatalism on the flat. Then five bandits dynamited the bank at the county seat, shucked sheaves of currency and bales of bonds from the vault, shunted them into a big car and went roaring off southward, as the courthouse clock struck three.

Wires cut. Sprinkle of rain falling.

Bob Forrest, Luke Haskell and the new deputy twenty minutes behind in an asthmatic light roadster. Ten miles of smooth gravel on the hill highway, with the big car making a runaway race of it.

Then more rain, and the muddy ooze of the Harrison creek bottom; the car flounders and labors while the flivver coughs doggedly on. Half-mile behind, now.

Out on the gravel again, the flivver is a snail and six cylinders shove the quarry on toward safety.

The twenty-eighth mile brings the flatwood. Sticky clay, ruts, washouts, pools in the swales. The tortoise is coming on. Luke heard 'em cross the Sanders culvert, a mile to the good. Gray dawn at the old mill-site, and a water-filled furrow where they had bogged for a precious half-minute.

The Walters farm and the Shelton pasture. There she is, two furlongs ahead, plowing along in low, searching for solid track. You can all take your big-money cars, but a tin-liz for Luke when he wants to go somewhere and be sure to get there. Same with Bob. The new deputy is uncommunicative, entirely unenthused.

The Simmons place with its stretch of comparatively dry road over which they hum at a discouraging rate of speed; then mud again, deeper than ever. She yaws, skids drunkenly, swerves into a pocket, and stalls, engine barking impotently, rear wheels spinning futilely, four yeggs shoving desperately, with battered, wheezing, mud-encrusted Retribution steadily eating up her wake.

Bandits are foolish, but not fools. The bandits desert the derelict, and dodge into the bush, each with a sack of plunder.

Out and after 'em.

The new deputy, breaking silence for the first time, opines that some one ought to stay with the cars. They might get stolen.

Steel-blue eyes glittering from beneath the bushy brows of an aroused Hampden can look a proper answer.

Eight miles straight south the trail lay as plain as a pavement, then swerved sharply to the left and dipped to Devil's Bayou, usually a succession of sluggish trickles and placid pools, now swollen into a formidable barrier.

The new deputy is strongly inclined to think that some one ought to go somewhere and telephone "on ahead."

Not even a look, this time.

A narrower place, with a fallen pine spanning sixty feet of tawny, raging current. Looks shaky, but where a yegg goes a sheriff must.

Muggy after the rain, and the going has been heavy for a stocky man. Bob dips his Stetson into the flood, laves brow and wrists, and rinses his mouth.

"Zero! Over the top! Let's——"

Luke got his, through and through, an inch below his right suspender buckle.

Bob got one in the muscle of his right arm.

The new deputy got none at all, for he

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had faded out of the picture some few seconds after the mode of crossing had been discovered. He lives today, a fat and contented tie-hauler, but not in Seminole county.

FIVE minutes.

The sheriff raises his head an inch above the twenty-four-inch oak-log, which is his fortress, and drops down, blood-blinded from a wound the length of his hoary pate.

Some one over there can shoot.

All clear enough, even to a dizzy man. Water on the other side of 'em, so they can get no further. They'll come back, if they can.

Leonidas.

A steady bombardment drums the log, cutting bark from its upper side. Got to have a look, though. Can't out-shoot 'em; have to out-guess 'em.

The sheriff writhed, snake-fashion along the log, finally deserting it for the trunk of a standing gum, vine-clad and bush-veiled.

So that's the game: Four shooting to keep Bob down, while the fifth makes crossing.

Courage is admirable, wherever shown. The yegg had it. Gun in hand, eyes on the treacherously swaying bridge, the bandit came steadily on to meet whatever might be waiting for him.

Ten feet from safety, eight, five, and old Bob's gun bellowed spitefully—a clean miss.

Two more steady steps, then, with one foot searching for secure foothold on the bank, the bandit sees poor old Bob swaying to his knees and vainly attempting to steady his pistol.

Like a flash the yegg raises his own weapon, but away back up the slope a light rifle barks like the snap of a teamster's whip. Like a sledge-struck beef, the yegg folds up, and slips off the log into the torrent.

Dan Simmons, of course. Who else? Square between the eyes at a hundred yards. Danny Simmons is not against *this* kind of law.

Well, it's Danny and them for it; old Bob has quietly fainted.

And it was Danny and them for it until the Jones menfolk and the Bascombs and Baileys and Underhills, and Lem Whitacker, of nightshirt-hunting fame, arrived by ones and twos to take up the burden of strife, pending the arrival of further reinforcements and the construction of a cordon on either side of the bayou, through which a mosquito could not have passed without having his eye-winkers shot off.

The law in its majesty.

WHEN next Sheriff Forrest visited the flat, he jogged comfortably down the big road in the broad light of a sunny day, Sunday at that.

Unprecedented.

Answering the widow's constrained, "come in an' set" by going in and sitting he remarked that the roads were good, and that Spring plowing had commenced up in the hills, and that he wanted to see Danny on personal business.

Without hesitation, Ma Simmons took her cow-horn to the kitchen window, and blew three long blasts, two short and a long. That sacred code, again.

Five minutes brought Danny, gun in the hollow of his arm. With a silent nod, he crossed to the fireplace and rested the piece over the mantel.

Truce accepted.

When Bob Forrest has something to say, he says it—

"Danny, I gotta hev a deputy to fill the vacancy which has existed subseequent to, an' durin' the service o' that jasper that run out on me over on the bayou. I figger that you're the feller that'll jist suit me.

"Luke's wobblin' 'roun' ag'in, but there's work fur three, most o' the time. What d'you say, an' not back out?"

"But Bob," broke in the widow, excitedly, "what about that there indictment?"

"Squshed. The judge squshed it flatter 'n a flitter when me an' Colson told 'im that the evidence at hand wouldn't warrant no proseecution with no hope o' securin' no conviction.

"I want a man who will stand at my back an' see that the laws is enforced—" hastily adding as an afterthought—"leastwise, *some* laws, sich as them ag'in cattle rustlin' an' bank robbin' an' the like. You're the man."

Danny Simmons never made but one speech in his life:

"My folks learnt me to do what was right, an' I always tried to live up to my raisin', but layin' out there in the timber gives time fur thinkin', an' I have made out that there is somethin' wrong with our way o' doin'.

"Doc Brookheart had Wes Whitcomb arrested fur spittin' on the sidewalk, up in town. That was his pet law.

"Ol' Man Bobbitt got that game-warden

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feller arter the Underhill boys fur shootin' quails out o' season. That was his pet law.

"Josh Brooks got fined fur whippin' his mules, an' got even by havin' the feller that signed the complaint arrested fur runnin' his hoss on the highway. Each of 'em was backin' his own pet.

"'Lige Martin turned me in to the federalists, cause I made a little "shinny" now an' then, an' then he got skeart fur fear I would git 'im, an' set the dog on me to start trouble, so's he could have an excuse fur shootin' me. Behin' all of it was the fact that I wouldn' pet his pet law.

"Then all of us fellers who had busted other folkses pet laws jumped onto that gang over on the bayou an' shot 'em up because they was kickin' one of our pets, an' they tored into you an' Luke, 'cause you was backin' a law that they didn' keer nothin' 'bout.

"We all gotta quit keepin' pets. I'm your deputy, an' me an' Luke an' you gotta bring all the law to this flat, jist as she reads in the books, an' we gotta do it, *jist 'cause it's the law.*"

Chewing her snuff-stick, Ma Simmons hung the begrimed coffee-pot over the blaze, put sweet potatoes to roast in the embers nearer the hearth, eased thick slices of pink ham into the skillet, and proceeded to mix biscuit dough in a harmonious silence which no one thought of marring.

In the back patch Harry whistled tunefully, down on the slough bullfrogs "*chugarummed*" in lazy content and in the oak-top over the ridge a redbird caroled blithely.

Ma Simmons' felt slippers "*scuff-scuffed*" busily from hearth to work-table; the kettle blubbered hopefully, and the coffee-grinder skirled its message of cheer. Shadows steadily drove back the sunlight and consolidated their gains in the haw-thicket, as Ma lifted the cover of the Dutch oven, disclosing brown-roofed biscuits—the final touch.

Without insulting hospitality by waiting for an invitation, Sheriff Bob shambled over to the wash-bench to slosh face and hands in a basin of tepid suds, emerging ruddy-faced and ready to display his trenchermanship.

Belt hangs at the saddle-horn, this time.

With a hand on the back of his chair, Danny suddenly grows rigidly attentive, and holds up a cautioning hand.

Faint from afar floats the vesper note of the gingham girl:

"*Suk Boss! Suk Boss! So-o-k! So-o-o-k! So-o-o-o-o-k!*"

Heedless and apparently unheeded, Danny Simmons claps on a battered Stetson, leaves guest and viands, leaves the prized rifle on its pegs, and sets out for Hickory Ridge, bearing as betrothal gifts, peace and the law.

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GO-FEVER

A Three-Part Story
Part One

By

J. Allan Dunn

Author of "Linx," "The Man Who Spoke With the Wind," etc.

CHAPTER I

FOG AND FORTUNE

"GOLD! Slathers of it! Spattered all over the reef! Bright as brass in the sun! We could have dug out a fortune with our knives. We would—only——"

"Only you woke up," suggested Cole as the other paused to relight his pipe. "Tough luck, Reynolds, you couldn't have stayed asleep."

The stocky Anzac grinned at the lean Yankee who shared the bench with him.

"I'm not spoofing, sarge. The gold was there and is yet. There were about seventy-nine reasons why we didn't collect. Seventy-nine naked Myalls—more or less—wild blacks, coming out of the caves in the lava, chivvying us through the spinifex and herding us through the scrub, slinging spears from their throwing-sticks, chucking *nolla-nollas* an' boomerangs.

"I'd have liked to wake up. It was a nightmare all right, with those mother-naked cannibals, bare as worms, leapin' after us like —— had a holiday.

"They came —— near gettin' us, sarge. We had eleven cartridges left between the two of us. That was before the War an' I wasn't much on strategy. All we did was to run like a couple of scared dingoes till we could taste the blood in our throats an' then stand 'em off with a shot or two.

"If it hadn't been nigh sundown when they rushed us I wouldn't be sitting here chinnin' with you. They're afraid of the dark. Scared of Old Man Kvingan catchin' 'em an' eatin' their kidneys. He's their main devil-devil. Maybe they chased us clean out of their territory and funked bumpin' in to another tribe. They're all hostile.

"Anyway, they quit. We didn't. They'd got Bill, my chum. Spear went through his thigh. We pulled it out. Had a bone tip. They don't use poison, but it must have been foul, way it acted.

"We kept moving all night, best way we could, makin' to'ard the coast an' a squatter's station. Trailin' through the hills, down gullies full of rocks, fallin' down an' gettin' up, splashin' through water, snagged by lawyer-palms, tied up in the brush.

"I bet I fell fifty times. They'd clipped me on the back of the head with a *nolla-nolla*—that's a sort of club pointed at both ends—an' I was dopey. We were both losing blood. The sun come up an' there we were on a hilltop in the scrub—no shade—tuckered out—nothing to eat—no way to get grub. Nothing in sight but scrub—an' not a sound. Not even a bird or a bushrat. All set for goin' west an' Bill's leg the size of a barrel. Done—for fair."

"A police patrol come along about noon. Native sergeant and some troopers lookin' for a black named Mangora who'd murdered a white with an ax an' chucked his body in the river. They don't eat whites.

"The troopers took us into Cardwell and

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Bill got a doctor. They took off his leg at the hip but it was too late. Blood poison had worked up too high."

Reynolds stopped talking, sucking at his pipe while the fog closed in, rolling up from San Francisco Bay, moist on the bench, dripping from the trees. Vague figures drifted past them in the mist, wandering up the sloping paths toward Chinatown, aimless and furtive, craving food, lodging, liquor, opium, vagrant vagabonds of the night.

"I got the beggar that speared Bill," said Reynolds presently. "Spang in between the eyes. Bill was a game buddy."

Cole sat silent. He no longer believed that the Anzac was spinning a yarn. The thing had been described too vividly.

Gold! Glittering like brass in the sun! The sweltering heat of the Australian bush, the naked blacks leaping in the needle-pointed spinifex grass, the humming spears and curving boomerangs!

What a contrast to the bench in Portsmouth square, the fog blending afternoon and night in a clammy veil that emphasized the fact that they were broke and hungry and out of work, with no place to go.

The pair had journeyed three days since, scouring the waterfront for a job, meeting every evening at the present rendezvous. American and Anzac, both had come through the war and now faced the perils of peace and an exploding boom. It was the wrong time of year. The Californian harvest was over with its fruit picking and odd jobs of packing and tallying. Steady positions were precious things, hung on to by their lucky occupants like snails to their shells.

Lights struggled through the fog, back of them in Chinatown, ahead and to right and left in Montgomery Street and the narrow avenues leading to the bay. These were the illumination of mockery. Windows in the Hall of Justice where even the prisoners had full bellies and warm cells; the fronts of pawnbrokers, the signs of restaurants, with nothing to pledge and empty pockets.

"Where was this dump, Reynolds?"

Cole put the question perfunctorily. Silence only aggravated appetite and discomfort that, in their turn, deadened the first interest awakened by the Anzac's story.

"Queensland. Up north. Back of Rockingham Bay. Headwaters of the Herbert River."

Reynold's own tones were dull. His tobacco sack was empty. He had shared it with Cole, who had consumed his portion in cigarets.

"I'm goin' back there some day, when I get me a stake."

"Didn't they land you back in Australia?"

"They did—and another bloke had my job. Only folks I've got are in Adelaide. Married sister. I'm no sundowner. I got a chance to make Vancouver workin' in a ship's pantry. Vancouver's as full of men out of work as a sick dog has fleas. So I trailed down here. They said the States got rich durin' the War but I ain't noticed any spondulics lyin' round loose or easy to come at."

"Nor me." Cole spoke without rancor. He accepted conditions as an obstacle to be overcome. He had been worse off—overseas.

"Trouble with me," said Reynolds, "is that I've got go-fever. I hate to stay in one place, like a flyspeck on a map."

"Same here. That's what brought me to the coast. I belong back in New England. Not that I'd be any better off there. Don't know that I used to be that way. There's a lot feel the same since the War. I reckon we saw a bit of the world and now we want to see the rest."

"So long as it ain't in the same fix Europe was. Me, I've had my belly full of fightin'. That kind of fightin'. Muck an' mud an' stink an' blood an' your buddies dyin' by the dozen."

He knocked the ashes from his pipe.

"But the gold's there, all right, sarge. Enough to make you an' me an' a dozen others rich ten times over. *B-r-r-r-r!* Some climate! They call it the Land of Sunshine. I used to cuss the heat back home. Wish I was there long enough to get warm once."

They lapsed into silence. Back of the bench was the monument to a man who had the go-fever, who lived dying on his feet, master of philosophy and romance. Here he had lain listening to the yarns of derelicts that he was to weave into rare adventure, coughing and covering it with a smile.

The gallant little bronze galleon on its stone pedestal strained its swelling sails

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toward the south, dank with the fog, fitting memorial of Robert Louis Stevenson. The mist and the falling night hid the words graven in the granite.

TO REMEMBER
ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

To be honest, to be kind—
to earn a little, to spend
a little less—to make upon
the whole a family happier
for his presence—to renounce
when that shall be necessary
and not be embittered—to keep
a few friends but these with-
out capitulation—above all on
the same grim condition to
keep friends with himself—
here is a task for all that
a man has of fortitude and
delicacy.

Curious phrases to be set in a place that had known barricades and mobs rioting and law-breaking and the making of laws. Here the American flag had been raised in defiance to Mexico and criminals hung by the Vigilantes. Once, "when the water came up to Montgomery Street," tall ships had anchored on the site of the Hall of Justice and the Custom House had stood where was now the portal to Chinatown and the Latin Quarter, the entrance to San Francisco's tawdry tenderloin, the lounging place of the human flotsam and jetsam of the Pacific Oceans.

Brave words, but, to the homeless, bitter. Cole had read them more than once and they had left him cynical.

To be honest, to be kind—to earn a little, to spend a little less.

He paraphrased them to match his own plight. Honest folks there might be, and kind, but they were not likely to be found near Portsmouth Square. He could not earn even a little and therefore could not conceivably spend less than nothing. Family he had none—one brother killed in the Argonne. What had he to renounce and why should he not be embittered? As for delicacy . . . What had a man who was eager to work, capable of working, but who was slowly losing strength from lack of sufficient nourishment, whose shoes were through at the soles and whose clothes were out at elbows and thin at the knees, to do with delicacy?

"You've got your health," he told himself. "Stevenson lived in the death-house with his sentence pronounced."

But it was hard not to be bitter.

Cole had met many panhandlers. Some of them had tackled him before he got too shabby and showed the visible signs of misfortune. These did not starve. They probably had several dollars in their pockets at the end of every day. Some of them whined tales of the War, of being gassed, of losing their jobs, and these Cole told what he thought of them with the voice and manner of Top Sergeant Jimmy Cole.

He couldn't do that, he told himself. Any kind of work, but a man must keep his self-respect.

In the trenches he had been dirty, mud-caked, preyed on by vermin, but that condition was only relative. Now he needed, more every day, a bath, a shave, a clean collar and a change of linen. So did Reynolds.

"A stiff upper lip, my son," he told himself as he shrugged down into the collar of his coat. "Can't be worse is bound to be better."

"I've got a pal up on Telegraph Hill," said Reynolds, "who's got a studio. Think I told you about him. Met him down to a dago restaurant last week. We got to talking and sort of chummed up. I went up to his place once. He baches it and he cooks up some fine messes. He'd put us up. Lots of room. Bohemian, he calls himself. Name of Petrie. Artist. I don't know how good he is, but you can tell what he tries to paint. Mostly the hills and oaks on the other side of the bay. And he's got some sort of a boat he goes out on, with himself an' a dog. He's away now up the Sacramento River. Won't be back till the end of the week. All his pictures are sort of sunny an' I suppose he's dodgin' this rotten fog. It's mostly local, they say.

"That don't do us any good right now. We ought to be movin'. We'll get wet through. Where'll we go? There's the Jack London readin'-room. It's warm there an' you can stick around till late. Or we can take in the Salvation Army. Bed an' breakfast if you saw wood."

"Let's mosey down-town, anyway," said Cole. "We may strike something."

"I could eat raw dog, right now," said Reynolds. "Come on."

They started walking down Montgomery Street to Market, passing crowded restaurants where men and women sat with busy waiters bringing them dishes of hot food.

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Once Reynolds paused in front of a pawnshop.

"They've got my Luger" he said. "Picked it up on the other side. The Heinie had no more use for it. Kept me in grub for awhile."

The window depressed Cole. It was full of pledges parted with in time of stress, and their display for sale showed that the bad luck of their original owners had not departed.

They passed a narrow alley, intended for deliveries. On the opposite corner was another restaurant. The street seemed filled with them. As they crossed the alley a side door opened and a man was violently ejected. As he sprawled on the ground some clothing was thrown after him.

He picked up the garments and came lurching toward the main street. He wore a greasy apron, his sleeves were rolled up and his head was bare.

Cole checked Reynolds, who was passing on.

"What did they do to you?" he asked the man.

The chap stared at them.

"Me. Fi-i-ired me," he answered with a hiccough. "Fired the besh dis'washer on the Pashific Coash. Jush—hic—cause I busted some of their cheap dishesh. Yeshir!"

He broke into a drunken volley of oaths, struggling to get into his coat, his hat perched askew as Cole gripped Reynolds' arm and hurried him along.

"Here's where we eat, Tom Reynolds," he said. "Also bunks an' tobacco."

They entered the restaurant, asking for the proprietor. A busy waiter surveyed them doubtfully.

"He's out back cannin' the dishwasher," he said. "Here in a minnit!"

A flustered, red-faced man appeared, with signs of wrath still smoldering within him, going back of the counter behind the girl cashier—Cole tackled him.

"Want a dishwasher?" he asked.

A gleam of hope appeared in the man's eyes, then faded.

"What you know erbout washin' dishes?" he demanded.

"Enough to wash 'em quick, wash 'em clean and not break 'em. I don't want a regular job. Help you out tonight. Supper for me and my buddy, a pack of cigarets and a tin of smoking. Dollar in cash. You can get another man in the morning. You can't tonight and you're busy."

The proprietor looked dubious. Cole grinned at him. The clear and efficient look of his gray eyes, his crisp talk, offset his shabbiness and the suggestion that he would tackle anything that offered, whether capable or not. More customers entered.

"All right," he said. "Git busy. You eat in back. I'll git you an apron."

The two trailed him in through a door and past a partition that had an opening through which waiters bellowed their slangy orders and received the dishes. The place was full of steamy odors of food that went to their heads and left them giddy as their stomachs yearned for something to fill them. There were two cooks busy at a big range, carvers and vegetable men filling orders, bus boys hurrying in with dirty plates to add to a great pile on double drainboards beside two sinks of steaming water.

The owner spoke to a cook and to a server, then brought two aprons.

"Just fired a drunk," he said. "We're gittin' stuck. If your pal helps you I'll make it four bits more."

"You're on," said Reynolds. "You wash, sarge, an' I'll wipe."

A man brought over two bowls of soup and two generous roast beef sandwiches with two mugs of coffee.

"Take a bite as you go, fellows," he said. "Chow after the rush."

"'Mergency rations," said Reynolds. "Sarge, we're in soft. You've got a head on you."

Cole swallowed the hot soup with his salivary glands working overtime. He plunged at his work with a will heartened by the swift shift of fortune.

"A human's a poor sort of machine," he soliloquised. "Runs down too sudden. But I guess the luck has turned a bit."

They left the restaurant three hours later with an offer of permanent jobs if they wanted them and with two dollars instead of the dollar and a half promised.

The world looked very different now. The fog, instead of being a pall to all their hopes, merely created rainbow haloes round the electric standard lamps.

"Where'll we go? asked Cole, serene in the fact that choice of bedrooms lay before them.

"Not to that dump we were in last night. I want something to sleep on better than a

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donkey's breakfast. Let's try Murphy's. Two in a room for six-bits, and a hot bath for twenty cents. Down on Third Street.

"Sounds like the Ritz. You're leading."

Murphy's was unpretentious but clean.

THERE was one room vacant and they paid for it in advance, getting two towels and two red squares of thick cardboard with numbers on them.

"Hang 'em outside the bathroom on the hook," said the clerk. "So the guys can see how long they got to wait. One on each floor. Red, white an' blue cards. You're on the first. Want to go up?"

They looked at their numbers—eleven and twelve.

"Number Eight's in the tub now," the clerk told them. "You lads are late for a clean-up. When a guy wants a bath he trails in early. None of 'em take long. S'posed to be a time limit of fifteen minnits. Sit around here if you want to."

The office was furnished with Windsor arm-chairs, there was a desk for writing and a table with some magazines and papers on it.

"Reckon we'll smoke a bit," said Cole.

They sat down chatting, drowsy and contented as the generous meals they had stowed away purred through the process of digestion. It was twenty minutes after ten.

On the half-hour two men entered, one burly and swaggering, his companion wizened and shifty-eyed.

"A sweet pair of crooks," whispered Reynolds.

The big man wheeled as if he had overheard them but went on again to the desk.

"Here's yore dollar, cully," he said. "Gimme the grip. An' here's another buck for the same room."

The clerk reached under the counter in front of him and brought out a heavy leather grip.

"The boss gave me Sam Hill for hanging you up last night," he said. "It's against the rules. Nothing but cash. I get fired if I do it again."

"Aw, the grip's worth six bucks to hock, with nothin' in it. Murphy gives me a pain. Where's the key?"

"All the rooms gone. These gents got the last. Number Twenty-Six."

The big man cursed and turned toward Cole and Reynolds.

"You're out o' luck, fellers. That's my room. Me an' my pardner had it for a week. Here's yore buck. Try Sullivan's, down street."

Cole laughed at him, taking it good-humoredly.

"What's the matter with Sullivan's for you?" he asked.

The other clenched two big fists.

"I'm stoppin' here," he said. "I like this place, see! Sullivan's is healthier for youse an' cheaper. All the lousy out o' work bums go there. Take your buck an' chase yoreselves."

The bully had been drinking some water-front brew that fumed itself into Cole's face as the other bent over him. Cole got out of his chair, pushing the big man back with a hand on his chest. He was in no humor to be called names. His shove, backed by a full stomach, was none too light.

"That's about all I want from you," he said. "We've paid for our room."

The clerk, pale-faced, lame and evidently apprehensive of trouble, retreated behind the desk. The bully whirled on him.

"Don't you call the cops, Jerry," he said. "You call an ambulance. You keep out o' this or you'll be ridin' in it along with this fresh ——."

Reynolds glanced at Cole expectantly, his lips forming into a grin. He waved a hand at the clerk reassuringly.

"Little man," he said to the companion of the bully, "you stand clear an' stay that way. You're goin' to see something."

Cole's face had stiffened to a fighting mask, his eyes were steely at the final epithet.

"He's goin' over the top, son," Reynolds said to the clerk. "Watch him."

For a moment the bully looked uncertainly at Cole as the latter advanced. He had expected to cow the shabby figure seated in the chair that had so suddenly come from lounging ease that disguised his true physique. Both of them were close to six feet. Cole was thin and the bully naturally big of frame and fat, easily forty pounds heavier.

He launched a savage swing. Cole ducked, side-stepped and jolted in a short-arm punch that landed hard between right hip and lower rib.

The other grunted, turned and rushed with a snarl and an oath. Cole waited for him, poised, smiling and confident. He

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put his head aside and the second haymaker went over his shoulder as he stepped inside the bully's guard, fending off the low-swung left with his right forearm.

His left shot out in a straight lead that found its mark just below the eye. His right came up in a crashing uppercut to the jaw.

The bully dropped to the ground like a falling chain. Cole stepped back, examining the knuckles of his right hand. Washing dishes had softened them and they ached.

"What did I tell you, son?" cried Reynolds. "One-two and out—just like that."

The wizened little man had skipped through the door just as another entered. Now the latter walked over to where the bully lay on the floor.

"He's out," he said with a judicial inflection to his husky voice. "You did a good job, my lad. What was the row, Jerry?"

"These two gents hired a room and bath, Mr. Murphy. These bums came back an' tried to make 'em give it up. He called this gent a ——."

"Pick up his feet, Jerry. We'll dump him."

Murphy stooped and made an easy burden of the shoulder end of the defeated braggart. Together they toted him through a side door to an alley and set him down, none too gently, beside an ash can, his bag under his head.

"He's comin' to," said Murphy as he reentered.

Murphy was red-faced and stout, with a protuberant stomach and walrus mustaches above which two blue eyes twinkled.

"You know how to handle yore dukes, my lad," he said to Cole.

"Why wouldn't he?" asked Reynolds, exultant at the fight and its outcome. "That stiff didn't have a chance. Not with my buddy, Sergeant Jack Cole, champion heavyweight of the Hemlock Division. First time I saw him overseas he was putting the kibosh on Tyler of the Rainbows an' givin' away thirty pounds at that to a guy that was clever."

The blue eyes of Murphy took on serious interest.

"Is that so? Done much fightin' lately?"

"No," said Cole.

He did not mean to be short with Murphy but the affair was over and, so far as he could be annoyed with Reynolds for sounding his praises, he was.

"Hurt your hands? Let me look at 'em."

Murphy handled them deftly, massaging them.

"They're all right, but they're —— soft. Need pickling. I'd like a talk with you in the mornin'. Going out early? All right. Meet you here in the office at eight. We'll have breakfast together, the three of us. Jerry, if that bum shoves his mug in here, tell him I'm home an' touch my bell. Good night, Cole. See you later."

He passed through a door back of the office with a friendly nod.

"That glass-jawed stiff won't be in again," said the clerk. "His pal seen Murphy come in. You know who Murphy is, don't you?"

"Not me," said Cole. "I'll find out at breakfast."

"You're new on the Coast. He's a pal of Alec Greggains. That's 'Bull' Murphy. He announces all the big fights. Used to referee 'em till he got so fat. Before that he was in the ring. He fought Sharkey fifteen to a draw. He's got his eye on you. He'll put you on.

"Say, you guys want to turn in? Gimme them bath cards, I'll fix it. Keep an eye on the desk."

"You're in luck, sarge," said Reynolds. "I've heard about this Murphy. Here we were broke an' never thought of lookin' for a bout."

Cole frowned.

"I'm not strong for fighting for money," he said. "But we sure need some. I reckon I'd rather fight at that, than wash dishes. Maybe we are in luck."

"We? Murphy ain't pickin' me."

"If he handles me for a preliminary, you're my manager, buddy. Wonder how much there'll be in it? Twenty would look like a million."

"Twenty—nothing! Wait till he gives you a tryout."

The clerk limped in again. He was plainly bent on being ingratiating.

"I fixed it with Number Ten," he said. "He was just goin' in."

They matched for first bath and Cole won. He lay in bed waiting for Reynolds. Murphy believed in good mattresses and springs and the sheets were clean, though Cole fancied the clerk might have had something to do with that. He pondered over the prospect with Murphy. He had little

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fear of making a good showing against a preliminary fighter. He had no idea that he was champion caliber. His weight was a bad one, taking him out of the middleweights against much heavier men than himself. Neither did he especially relish the idea of becoming a professional.

It was a port in a storm, he decided. He had no right to turn down any chance of making a stake. For one thing, he hated putting on again his discarded underwear after the cleansing bath. Reynolds was in just as bad a plight. The last few days had been hard ones.

Reynolds came in, stripping off, pink from the tub.

"I wish I could get my grip out," he said. "It's in for five dollars, over on Kearney Street where I roomed."

"They rushed me out of mine for four," said Cole. "I've got a couple of clean shirts and collars, some underclothes and a pair of kicks."

"Why didn't you underdress when they told you to get out?"

"They didn't tell me till I came in one night. Then they showed me a copy of the hotel regulations."

Reynolds chuckled—yawned.

"Me too," he said. "They're wise birds. As your manager, I'm goin' to draw ten bucks advance from Murphy first thing in the morning, hop down an' get our duds. They've got to keep 'em thirty days; they'll be O. K.

"Sarge, things are starting to come our way. Listen, there was no bunk about that gold mine I was tellin' you of. What's the matter with us tacklin' it together? Enough for a dozen an' then some."

"How about those black fellows?"

"The Myalls? I'll know how to handle things the next trip. You take in some of the blacks with you. Give 'em tobacco and dog biscuits for pay. An old hat and a shirt. When they put them on they're civilized, stuck up no end. You can trust 'em so long as you keep your gun handy an' don't let 'em get behind you. What do you say, sarge; will you go? I'd have gone back before only for the war. What do you say?"

Cole gaped. The need of sleep, the invitation of a clean-sheeted bed to his relaxed and bathed body, mastered all other things.

"Talk about it in the morning," he answered, reached out for the switch and extinguished the light.

CHAPTER II

THE GAME

COLE had no recollection of his head meeting the pillow but he suddenly found himself wide awake, listening for the repetition of something that had awakened his senses but failed to penetrate to his consciousness. The room was dark, the window indistinguishable, but, as his eyes adjusted themselves, he made out Reynolds up in bed. The Anzac began to mutter, then to talk aloud in his sleep and Cole knew what had roused him.

"Buck up, Bill, we'll make it. Bound to land somewhere's. Me? I ain't tired. They on'y got me on the head, Bill. You carn't hurt solid bone, buddy. My legs are good enough for the two of us. I can pack you on my back all night.

"Gold, smeared in, thick as seeds in a raspberry. Tough luck, to have your fingers on it an' lose it. Bill's bad, poor beggar. An' I'm tuckered out. We're all in an' done for. Down an' out. ——, for a drink of water! Bill needs it worse'n I do but he's asleep. Look at his leg. Big as a barrel. I'd give all the gold there was in the reef for a mug of water. Or a pint of bitter.

"More gold than there is in a bank. We'll get it, yet. Not Bill. The poor —— spent his last shilling. Me too, unless we get out of this bloody sun. No shade, no water, no grub, no gold. What would I give for a mug of ale, cold."

He began to laugh, like a man getting lightheaded, to make rhymes, ringing changes on the words:

> "No grub, no water, no gold, no shade,
> What would I give for a lemonade?"

A foolish chuckling of self approval.

> "No water, no gold, no shade, no grub,
> And here I sit, like a helpless dub."

"——! What's that? Men riding. Bill! Bill! *Bill!* Wake up. They're comin'. Come on, you! Ship full of gold for you, if——

"'Hi!' No use. I carn't yell. Throat's too bloomin' dusty. Make 'em look this way, ——! Make 'em look this way!"

His voice died down to a raucous whisper,

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desperately intense. The thing was real. It had been seared into his mind by the sheer heat of the bush, the hopelessness, the fever burning up both of them. Now, by some short circuit of his nervous system, his memory cells reacted, stimulated speech, once uttered in deadly earnest, responding to conditions.

As a man in hypnosis is said to reveal his most secret thoughts, so Reynolds, all unconsciously, was living over the adventure. And he was telling the truth, far more convincingly than when he had spun the yarn to Cole on the bench in the fog. So it seemed to Cole. From then on he never doubted the existence of the gold. At the moment he could see Reynolds staggering down waterless slopes, set with sharp-edged spinifex grass, bearing his wounded pal on his back.

He had said nothing about that before and Cole's heart warmed to the omission.

As if there was actual thought transmission, Cole saw the set face of Reynolds, like mouldy bronze, streaked with blood, his chum's head huddled down on a shoulder and the bloated leg outstretched like a clumsy shaft. The two of them, with Bill in merciful unconsciousness, one asprawl, the other asquat, on a scorching hilltop with scrub growth about them and, all about, the ridges, reaching out to blue haze under the blazing sun.

The little cloud of dust, horsemen in the midst of it, jogging along. The glint of arms. The agony of doubt and the prayer croaking from blistered lips.

"Oh, that's good! Good! Look after Bill, will you? Look out for his leg. I'm all set.

"Now I lay me down to sleep——"

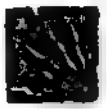
Reynolds sank back on the bed, the nervous stimulus ended, sleeping quietly.

It must have happened exactly like that. It was more vivid to Cole than a screen play would have been. There was color, heat, sound. Move for move and word for word, down to Reynolds, tended by the native sergeant and his police troopers, lapsing back to his childish bedrime. Cole had repeated the same verse after his mother —long ago.

> Now I lay me down to sleep,
> I pray the Lord my soul to keep.
> If I should die before I wake,
> I pray the Lord my soul to take.

He dropped off to sleep again, feeling a strong kinship with Reynolds, his go-feverish mate, making drowsy plans to fight, to make a stake and so to go after the gold with the Anzac. They'd get it too. The perils were nothing. They made the thing worth while. They'd buck them together and win through. Both of them had been through worse than that—over there. And came out of it safely.

So, while they slept, the ferment of adventure worked in the souls of both of them.



COLE said nothing to Reynolds in the morning about the latter's nightmare—if it was that. But, as they dressed, none too willingly, in their unlaundered underwear, he told him that he'd go with him to find the mine.

"Righto," said Reynolds. "Shake on it, sarge."

"If I can shape right I'll make a stake inside of a few weeks, Tom. Enough to get us to the other side."

"Good. I'm going down to the restaurant later on and take on that job. Three dollars a day, he said he'd give. Ha'f past eleven to ten-thirty. With the grub thrown in. Not so dusty."

"You're managing me."

"Go on. What do I know about that game? Murphy's managing you. It won't cut three ways with his bit out. I'm no deadhead."

"You're not stuck on washing dishes, either, any more than I am. It's your mine; I'll do the grubstaking."

But Reynolds was obstinate. Murphy wouldn't want him round. There was no other job in sight and he was taking it. And that was all there was to it.

"I forgot to tell you, sarge," he said as they laced their shoes. "I told Petrie—the artist chap—about the mine. He said he'd come along if he could sell a picture. He's a good sort. We'll go see him as soon as he gets back. You'll like him first rate. I hadn't met you then and there's scads of the stuff, anyway. I made him the offer, you see. He gave me a leg up. And he's one good sort."

The Anzac spoke almost pleadingly.

"Sure thing," answered Cole. "Wonder what time it is. Hard to guess in this fog. Look at it."

"Did we eat last night?" asked Reynolds. "I'd never know it. I'm starving.

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I'll put a crimp in Murphy's roll at breakfast. Let's go."

He opened the door, humming—

"Somewhere the sun is shining."

Murphy was waiting for them downstairs. They were conscious of their seediness but Murphy did not seem to notice it. They went across the street to a restaurant, where they consumed mush, biscuits, coffee, ham and eggs and hot cakes until Murphy called a halt on Cole.

"You'll put a belly on you, first thing you know," he said good-naturedly. "Your pal can go his limit and welcome. What do you weigh, Cole, stripped?"

"It used to be a hundred and seventy-eight, two weeks ago."

"Humph! Good bone." He took out a fat roll to pay the check, hesitated. "Got any stuff tied up? You've been out of luck, like all the rest of us, now and again. Better take a bill or two. You can pay me back."

"I may get licked," said Cole.

"There's always a loser's end. How much? Ten—twenty?"

"Ten's enough. Give it to Reynolds. He'll get our grips."

Murphy handed over the bill.

"You got a job?" he asked Reynolds.

"Yep. I'm fixed."

"You're pals, you two?"

They nodded in unison.

His bluff good-humor was contagious but Cole did not miss the fact that Murphy's blue eyes, twinkling now, were the kind that would grow cold and businesslike where money entered in. Just now he was investing. He would expect his dividends.

Reynolds departed to get their embargoed possessions and to take up his job.

"See you tonight, sarge," he said as he swung off in a jaunty stride through the mist.

"You've got no togs, I suppose?" asked Murphy.

"No."

He would have to get everything, Cole reflected. It would cut deep into his earnings at first. Shoes, trunks, protector, bath-robe.

"We'll fix you out," said Murphy. "We'll go up to the Olympic Club. Put you up there later. You'll meet friends. Good things to have in this game, more ways than one."

Box receipts and betting, thought Cole, his mind opening up to the ways of the professional fighter. Business under the guise of sport. A bit different from the sheer joy of it, pitting yourself against a good man, both urged on by the belief of hundreds of shouting comrades in your skill.

There had been betting on the other side, of course, but the game itself was clean. He felt a distaste for present prospects. Murphy's voice had become brusquer. Cole realized that, in the official announcer's eyes, he was merely a peg on which the other might hang some prestige, a vehicle for money making.

It was like the racing game. Few admired the symmetry, the supple muscles and the glossy skin of the contender, the gallant spirit that forged to the front out of a straining field; compared with those who demanded only speed to bring them in winnings at good odds. A horse was not a thing to be loved. Only its name was remembered when it won—marked for future speculations. If it lost, through fault of track, or jockey or starter, if it did its best and was outmatched, it was proclaimed a yellow dog.

So with the boxers of preliminaries, set-ups for rising champions or, if they won, patted on the back, dieted, watched, coached to make more money for their backers. It was different if one reached the top. Cole never expected to accomplish that. He was out to make a stake, nevertheless he felt that he was henceforth a mercenary. If he did not fight for the money alone, that was all Murphy cared for. If he failed, Murphy's philanthropy would evaporate before he got his gloves off. But it went with the job and the job was a means to a golden end.

They caught a Market Street car and got off at Ellis, entering a store where silk shirts, ties, gloves and canes were displayed jauntily. A beefy man came forward to meet Murphy, who introduced Cole.

"Sam Hyman—Sergeant Cole. Can you fix up the sergeant, Sam? I'm giving him a try-out."

The proprietor of the store surveyed Cole with a distinctly professional glance.

"Shapes pretty good," he said, as if the pair had been discussing a colt or a racing whippet.

He had shaken hands with Cole but the

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grasp was impersonal, the glad-hand of a man who meets customers.

"I've forgotten the sergeant end of it," said Cole. "The name is Jimmy. The war's over."

The two exchanged glances, somewhat amused.

"Got your bonus?" asked Hyman.

Cole grinned and said nothing. He had resented being treated as some sort of human automaton, but he was learning his lesson. If Tom Reynolds could wipe dishes, he could stand the gaff for a while. Hyman called a clerk, who asked his measurements. At Murphy's suggestion they were taped off and he and Hyman exchanged glances, presumably of approval, as the clerk checked the figures. Chest forty, waist thirty-one and a half.

"Need anything else?" Murphy asked.

Cole balanced his dislike of becoming too indebted to Murphy against the embarrassment of revealing his tattered underwear. He would have to strip, there would be a rub-down, and a shower, and he was touchy about cleanliness. At present he was not much better off than he had been in the trenches, dreading the necessity for a delousing process without the means.

"Union suit and a pair of socks," he said. "Size ten and a half on the socks. That will do till I get my grip."

He hoped he had given the inference that he had just arrived in town, then saw that neither Murphy nor Hyman had taken notice. They were discussing possible engagements for him as a trainer might speak of the possibilities of a Futurities entry. So far as he and his sensibilities were concerned he might as well have been deaf for all they considered him.

"Can he take it?" asked Hyman.

"We'll soon find out that," said Murphy. "He can hand it out all right. Got two hands. Champion heavyweight of the H. D."

"I've seen those war champions before," said Hyman. "Amatters and too stuck on 'emselves to learn."

Murphy took him aside and whispered to him while the clerk had the goods wrapped, charging them to Murphy's account. Cole took the slip.

"Hyman's coming with us," said Murphy as the proprietor excused himself to get his hat. "Know who he is?"

"No."

"He made quite a showing at one time. Too slow to go far but he was sparring partner for Jeffries. He can give you a few points, at that. You'll find the professional game different from the amatoor, my son. There's tricks in all trades."

Cole grinned again. He was beginning to find his balance on the new level, his sense of humor coming to the rescue. The thing was going to be good for his pride, he fancied. And pride was only excess baggage. When a man felt that he had any he might be sure he had too much.

Hyman appeared in yellow gloves, sport coat and green velour hat.

"We'll go up in the boat," he said. "She's right outside."

THEY shot up Powell Street in his car, past the St. Francis, and turned off to the big building of the club, going straight to the gymnasium where a man was perfunctorily punching a bag. Murphy introduced him as Hagerty, the club's boxing instructor, and Cole took to him immediately, his interest frankly returned.

"New one of Murphy's, Pat," said Hyman. "Want to see if he's a bloomer. War Champion," he added with a wink. "Who've you got round for a try-out."

"I don't know for sure, Mr. Hyman. "I'll send Tim to see. Maybe you'd like a round or two yourself?"

The instructor did not glance at Cole but Cole fancied he caught a suggestion of understanding sympathy. He would have liked a round or so with Hyman, he thought. The haberdasher was inclined to emphasize his assumed position as patron of the game. Hyman laughed it off.

"Too fat," he said. "Where's Tim?"

Tim proved assistant to Hagerty, coming out of a room to look over the loungers in the club. These idlers would not likely be professionals, Cole supposed, but Hagerty disillusioned him, after he had taken him into the dressing-room from which Tim had appeared.

" 'Seattle' Smith was in the club this morning," he said. "He's got a card. He hasn't worked out any today, though he's supposed to be keeping in condition for a go at Sacramento with Stub Hanlan. He's a tough bird and a slugger, though he can't box for sour apples. Weighs in at one-eighty-three. More like ninety now. Bad second-rater. Got a contract with Murphy?"

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"He hasn't seen me work yet," said Cole, sliding out of his clothes dexterously.

Hagerty busied himself with some gloves, but he turned the moment Cole was stripped and surveyed him. It was a different overlook from that of Hyman. There was personal interest and approbation in it.

"Murphy wouldn't bother with you if he wasn't pretty sure of a bargain. And you want to look out for your end of it. He can place you and shove you on if you make good—and you ought to if you know how to handle what —— gave you. But you hold out for seventy per cent. of the purses and Murphy to room and board you. It ain't as if he was a regular manager. He's fat, Murphy is; drippin' with kale. Want to weigh in?"

Cole stepped on the scales, the indicator trembling at one hundred and seventy-two. The lean weeks had taken toll. There was not a superfluous ounce on him.

"Clean as a grasshopper," Hagerty announced judicially. "You can build up a bit and do it right."

Evidently Hagerty took him seriously as an aspirant for ring honors. He liked Hagerty, but he could not help wondering what the instructor would think if he knew that Cole intended winning a purse or two and then starting out to find a gold mine.

"There's a lot of diff' between the amatoor an' the professional game," said Hagerty, echoing Murphy's words. "It won't bother you much at first in the prelim's. They're all amatoors there, most of 'em ring-shy, but, when you break into the game you'll need the right tips. They'll hand you a lot of wrong uns. There's more bum advice handed out back of a fighter's chair than there are fly tips at a racetrack. Thing to do is to find out your best style an' develop it. Don't try an' make yourself over to match the other fellow. Might as well hand him the purse. Good footwork, judge of distance an' a punch in each hand, with the haymakers cut out, 'll carry a man built like you up to the first string, if you train right. You've got a nice pair of legs an' a good reach. Cole, they'll tell you I don't shoot off my mouth very often—it don't pay in my job—but I'm tellin' you that you've got the makin's, if your jaw ain't porcelain an' you can stand takin' a lickin' or two."

"Thanks. I'll do my best. I haven't got a robe," he said as Hagerty took one from a peg, a faded garment of cotton blanketing once far gaudier in mockery of Indian design than any sober Navajo would have dared wear on the reservation.

There were about a dozen men in the gymnasium when Cole came out. He was not introduced to them. He was the show and they the patrons. Seattle Smith had condescended to try out the beginner, it appeared, and was now in a dressing-room with Tim administering to him.

He emerged with a grin on his shapeless face, trying to patronize the patrons who greeted him with curt nods. Cole he did not look at. He was all of a hundred and ninety and the muscles of his stomach had disappeared. Arms and legs were lumpy with muscle, there were great bunches of them on his shoulders, assembled there, Cole fancied, by work at some sledge-swinging trade before he sought the flowery meads of prize-fighting. He could have been fairly comfortable in a seventeen collar but it would have had to be half the ordinary width. As he faced Cole in the ring he sank his chin into the bushy hair of his chest and put an end to any attempt for the "point" unless he could be induced to extend it.

"Three rounds," snapped Murphy professionally. "I'll hold the watch. Will you handle 'em, Hagerty? Make it snappy," he said aside to Cole. "Don't be afraid to extend yourself. The way you shape is the way you'll start with me. In your corners. All set? Time!"

He tapped the gong and Smith came dancing ponderously from his corner. Cole met him in the center of the ring. He felt he could get away from this man easily enough, just as he knew that Smith could give him a dangerous wallop if he landed. He feinted, drew a counter, landed on Smith's cheek and found his follow-up caught on his opponent's glove while a smash to his ribs showed that he might easily underestimate the other's clumsiness. There was weight back of the blow. Seattle Smith meant business, or he was showing off.

Cole leaped away, his side scarlet, smarting. He took the attack on himself, boxing cleverly, finding that Smith had a defence that was hard to get through, for all its apparent awkwardness. The round ended in a smart rally in which Cole got in one clean punch that opened Smith's lip and brought an ugly look into his eyes.

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There was no one in his corner and Cole found his own chair. This was only a friendly bout and a referee was unusual. There was no friendliness in the face of Seattle Smith. There had been jesting about his tapped claret and Tim had had to act as a second, after all.

Cole found he could hold him off with left-arm jabs but once Smith worked him into the corner and, with a grin, rushed him, pounding savagely, with Cole against the ropes, fighting back in earnest. He saw an opening as the other swung curvingly and he drove in his right over the heart with a force that made Smith grunt, give ground, and, as Cole followed him up, fall into a clinch.

Then and there Cole learned his first lesson in the difference between the "pro" and the amateur. Hagerty hovered about them. Cole was a baby in this phase of the art. Smith easily smothered his attack and jolted him over the kidneys. In the break-away he got home hard between rib and hip, twice, and left Cole panting.

He got his revenge as Smith pressed his advantage, boring head down, chin in, swinging low body-blows hard and fast. Cole sprang back, making the other miss, then leaped in, letting loose an uppercut that rammed against Smith's long since flattened nose, straightening him up with the jar of it to receive a straight left that sent him staggering back.

There was a buzz from the little group. Hagerty, darting out of the way, patted Cole lightly on the back.

Smith came like a charging bull, his face bloody, jaw set, forcing for a clinch and Cole danced away, avoiding the corner, refusing the hold and, as Smith whirled, furious, he pivoted and smacked home a short, hard jolt that sank into the fatty crease of the professional's paunch and took the speed out of him.

The bell saved Smith from a pasting and he knew it as he sank puffing into his chair, with Tim again administering to him, winking at Hagerty, including Cole in the intimate grimace.

The third round was comparatively tame. Smith hunched up, refusing to open up, boring in, shaking his head doggedly as Cole reached it with left jabs. Once he tried for a clinch again, frustrated by a punch that was just a shade too high for his plexus. Then he turtled, wrapping his arms about him, his head low, sullenly countering and lunging. At the last he unwound a swiping haymaker that missed by five inches as Cole drew back his head. It turned him half-around and Cole darted in to give punishment as the gong clanged—early he thought.

THERE was no shaking hands. Cole, comparatively ignorant of ring tactics, advanced but Smith sneered at him through blood-streaked features, turned and climbed down. Hagerty took Cole by the elbow and led him back to the dressing-room. A husky Swede appeared in answer to a pushed button.

"Rub-down, Oley," said Hagerty and the pungent smell of alcohol, the kneading joy of rub and expert massage made Cole happy on the slab.

"He bane in purty good shape," said Oley as he stood up.

Hagerty nodded.

"They'll want you in the next room, Oley," he said. Then, to Cole:

"You've got a lot to learn, Cole," he said. "A lot to unlearn, but you ought to make it. Don't get too confident. You can judge distance but there are others who'll make a monkey out of you at it. Some one is going to tear you apart in a clinch if you don't wise yourself up. Many a battle lost that way by a clever man with his fists. You work too much. It's all right to lead if you're piling up points but see if the other fellow won't bring it to you once in a while. Get the best of a rally and you'll take the judges with you. I'd like to have the handling of you, but Murphy's got his own ideas. At that I'd be glad to tell you what I know, if you'll take it."

"Glad to," said Cole, getting his clean underwear out of the package. "I'm much obliged to you as it is."

"Not a bit. I'm in a gentleman's club, Cole. I love the sport and you're the kind I like to see win. There ain't too many sportsmen in the game. And there are too many gamblers. You'll find that out. Don't you want a plunge?"

"I can't swim," Cole confessed.

"Take a shower then. And learn to swim. Best kind of exercise, wind and power. You can go down this way. Murphy'll be waiting for you in the lounge. Take your duds along with you. Don't forget about that seventy per cent."

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Tim came in grinning.

"Smith's sore," he said. "Swears it's a set-up. I reckon it was, though you're new to the game, kid. Shake. Did me good to see Smith pumpin' for wind. He nearly got you in that clinch, though."

Cole shook hands with the wizened assistant, who had a cauliflower ear and one blind eye that had stopped his lightweight career long ago. He got his shower and found Murphy with Hyman and three or four others. Now these were introduced. Cole had qualified. But they still regarded him as a specimen rather than a fellow man. But he did not resent it any more. He had a sore spot on his ribs but he was content with his showing. Hyman was more affable.

"How about a little chow?" he suggested. "We'll run out to the Beach?"

"Some other time, Sam," Murphy answered. "I'm going to talk business with this lad."

"All right. Going to use him Friday? Look out for your eye teeth, Cole. Don't sign your life away."

He joined a group and they went out together. Murphy took Cole to a padded seat. He made no reference to Cole's showing.

"I'll sign you for a year," he said. "I pay expenses. You'll have to do just what I tell you. No high life. The contract 'll cover that. Sixty—forty of the gross you earn."

Cole shook his head.

"I wouldn't want to sign up for that long," he said. "I can't——"

He stopped himself, prompted by Murphy's scowl.

"Don't be a fool," said Murphy. "I can let you in and I can keep you out."

"I'll not sign a contract until I've had my first good fight," said Cole firmly, though he feared he saw his grubstake dissolving. "I'll give you an option on me after that—if I win." Murphy stared at him—then laughed.

"All right," he said. "What's the idea? If I say you'll do it ought to be good enough for you. Or ain't the terms suitin' you? You're green yet, my son."

"I know it. That's why I'm holding off till I know what I can do. I'll sign an agreement for each fight, at seventy-thirty. If I'm good enough for you at all I'm worth that."

"You're a cool bird," said Murphy. "I've handled a good many boys but you're the nerviest. I'm —— if you don't pay for the stenographer though. Agreement with every fight? Who do you think you are? Dempsey?"

Cole saw that somehow he had appealed to Murphy's sense of humor.

"It's my New England training," he ventured.

Murphy laughed, smiting his thigh, tears in his eyes.

"You'll have trainin' of a different sort from now on," he chuckled. "Seventy-thirty! If I sign, my lad, it's mum between us. I don't want to be laughed at. I'm giving in to you because you trimmed Smith. He's been bothering for a fight with a man I'm interested in and now he won't get it. My man's too much on his own order yet awhile. He's got as much to learn as you have to forget.

"I'm taking you out to Colfax tomorrow. You'll train there. You're goin' on in a preliminary Friday. It's a good program and it'll give folks a line on you. I can use you fairly often if you follow orders an' don't go stale. Harris 'll work you out. You pay attention to what he says. I'll be out every afternoon. I've got a short stable there—two lights and a middle. The grub's good an' it's right. You can lay off for today. There's fifty in it for you, Friday. Better draw thirty an' get yourself an outfit. You want to look prosperous.

"See you tonight," he said finally. "I'll have the papers for you to sign. No late hours, my son!"

He was still chuckling when Cole left the club, walking over to the restaurant for a word with Reynolds, thirty dollars in his pocket, half of which Reynolds emphatically refused.

"Nothin' doin'!" he said. "Goin' to eat here? I'll see you get a fancy cut. I'm in solid."

They were standing at the door in the alley from which they had seen the drunken dishwasher ejected. It seemed long ago to Cole with the swift turn of fortune that had followed it. He briefly explained to Reynolds what had happened and again suggested that the latter give up his job.

"Otherwise I won't be seeing much of you after tonight," he said. "And I think I am going to make out all right in the

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game—up to a certain point. By the time I reach that we ought to have stake enough to get us over to Sydney or wherever we start from. I'm a bit hazy about Australia."

"Sydney first, then Brisbane and then a trip up the coast. Maybe we can pick up a small boat. Petrie can be the navigator."

"Can he?"

"He ought to be able to do that much. Been sailing for two-three years. We'll keep in sight of land all the way. Along the Great Barrier Reef. I tell you, Cole, it's going to be no end of a good time. Wish we were starting tomorrow. But I'm stickin' to the job. Pos-i-tive-ly. Now I've got to get back to my plate polishing. So-long. See you tonight."

Cole shook his head over Reynolds' obstinacy but admired it. It was a try-out though he had not so intended it. But it showed the stuff Reynolds was made of. Most chaps, he fancied, would have laid off when a chum asked them to. The few words the Anzac had said about their expedition fired him, the idea of the three of them coasting along the Great Barrier Reef —there was a book he dimly remembered— "Three Men in a Boat—To Say Nothing of the Dog." By an English humorist. He had read it and thought it genuinely funny, with a modified feeling, against the idea that there was no humor in England. The title was certainly apt to their occasion. Petrie had a dog.

Cole wondered what sort of a chap Petrie was. He sounded interesting, probably impracticable, being an artist; but no one would really consider their trip a practical proposition. It was the go-fever in all three of them—or the gold-fever—or both. A happy-go-lucky, haphazard affair. Three embryo millionaires, one a dishwasher, the other an impecunious artist—for he had gathered the impression that Petrie's art was not especially profitable—and the third breaking into the prize-fighting game.

Happy-go-lucky, but fascinating. A phrase came into his head—Cole had done a good deal of reading, one time and another— "for to admire and for to see." Perhaps that was the real spur that sent men adventuring, when they were young. To go on strange trails, amid savages, to find a treasure-house of Nature and claim it for their own. It was a bully thing to do and three seemed the magic number. Three for One and One for All, or whatever way the motto had been of the three greatest chums of all time.

The Great Barrier Reef! Somewhere, in a magazine devoted to true tales of adventure that he had read numbers of, off and on, there had been a yarn that talked of the beauties of the Reef, its living sponges and coral, gorgeous sea-gardens and strange-shaped, vividly painted fish. How little most chaps knew about the world and a library of volumes meant nothing beside a few hours of experience. The war had taught him that.

He bought his clothes, went to the room and found his grip. Half an hour later he was on the street again, feeling like a new man. The winds had chased the fog as the sun had broken it up and weakened it. For a few hours, until the sun dropped downward into the sea Chinawise, San Francisco was a city set in an ideal climate, brisk and full of inspiration.

MURPHY called for him in the morning in Hyman's car and they went a short way down the peninsula to Colfax, where out-of-door fights of noteworthy memory had been pulled off under the management of "Sunny Jim" Coffroth, so yclept, not necessarily from his disposition but from the luck he had in choosing sunny weather for his arena programs.

Harris was an expatriated Englishman, become a voluntary citizen of the United States, but with a keen interest in the progress of the British Empire, a fanatic admirer of Lloyd George. He brought up the subject almost immediately, waving a paper at them.

"They've thrown 'im down," he said, "but it won't last. The 'andwritin' is on the wall. The honly thing keepin' royalty together is the smile of the Prince of Wales. A fine lad, that. A pity to waste 'im. But Lloyd George was the Man of the People if he ain't the Man of the Hour. But the clock's gettin' ready to strike. The haristocracy's doomed, I tell you. Lloyd George is the type of the new Britisher. Foller 'im and 'is kind and they'll 'ave a Constitooshun over there, same as 'ere."

"Including prohibition, Harris?" asked Hyman.

"Not them. They won't take away a man's beer by pretendin' its a war measure an' then 'angin' it up for keeps. Stout an' ale's the right stuff for trainin'. Take 'em away an' you've got nothin' to substitoot.

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Me, I take my licker where I can git it, gents, becos I need it."

He broke into a fit of coughing and looked gingerly at the handkerchief with which he checked the spasm.

He had been one of England's best lightweights, Murphy told Cole, coming out on the car. He had started an American visit with several victories, the last of which, hard earned, bitterly contested, had left him the natural challenger of the champion. But his vitality had been lowered by the fight and consumption had laid its grisly hand upon his shoulder. A year in Arizona, followed by residence on the Pacific Coast, had checked the disease but his fighting days were over and the shadow still darkened him.

But he was, according to Murphy, the best trainer of fighters in the United States, bar none. He knew the game, he knew men and he had a faculty for developing them at their best and keeping them in condition.

His three men were, he said, out on the road but would soon return. He suggested a try-out for Cole with the middleweight and gave no opinion, appeared hardly to look over his new pupil while he listened to Murphy's ideas on what Cole needed.

"He goes on Friday against Petersen, the chap that the carmen are so strong for. He's a motorman now and I think he's likely to stay one. But he'll bring in a few pennies, enough to pay for the preliminary purse. Cole should make a monkey out of him with some tips from you about handling himself in the clinches. And he can stand a little more weight, I fancy."

"We'll see," said Harris noncommittally.

"How's Berny shaping?"

"First class. The lad's willing and clever. Ought to win. If he don't I'll give him another licking myself when he comes back." Harris laughed.

"Like to see him," said Murphy, "but I've got a date. Sam here wants to get back to the store. May meet 'em on the road. Which way did they go?"

"Rather you didn't. I like to keep 'em moving when they're out. See you tomorrow?"

"Most likely."

The car left. Harris turned to Cole with something of personal feeling.

"Show you round the place," he said. "We bach' it. Got a good Jap cook. Good grub an' good beds. Nothin' like 'em. And we ain't 'idebound on rules. Bed at nine—up at five-thirty—shower an' rubdown every day. No smokin'—bad for the wind. And I mean none—just that. No eatin' between meals. 'Ope you'll like it and 'ope you'll be with me a long time. Murphy's a good un to tie up wuth. The three lads are good sorts an' the little Jew's a wonder. Here they come now, down the road."

Cole found Bernstein interesting. There had been a time when he fancied that a Hebrew was not a good fighter. The war had entirely dispelled that idea together with the fact that many of them had proved their gameness in the ring. The lightweight thought of only three things—his condition —improvement in cleverness — and the money he was going to make out of it.

"You don't last long at this game," he said. "Not even if you're lucky. A guy is just a flash. Well, you should make money while the light burns, ain't that right? And there ain't any sense in makin' money an' spendin' it, to my mind. Plant it. What use would it be if you were a farmer to eat up all the seed potatoes?"

It was clear that to Bernstein fighting was a business. And he knew his business. He was naturally adapted for it. How much he enjoyed it was a speculation. Undoubtedly he liked to win, aside from the big end of the purse. But applause left him unshaken. It was the feeling of personal triumph.

"That handclapping don't get you a thing," he told Cole. "It ain't you they're givin' it to. It's the winner."

The other lightweight was a lanky stripling, with some promise, but Bernstein was the stake horse on Murphy's stable. He reminded Cole of a shuttle in a loom, weaving his own pattern of attack. More than a mere sting in his punches. Cullen, the middleweight, was a good puncher and a willing mixer; gradually acquiring ring tactics.

"Don't you go tryin' to show 'ow much classier than 'im you are," Harris warned Cole. "You're 'eavier than 'im anyway an' maybe cleverer. Let him clinch with you. Let him teach you something. Infighting's half the battle. If you carn't take care of yourself in a clinch you're on the short end. Never mind your jabbin' with Cullen. From now on you ain't boxing—you're fighting."

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"You twig?" the trainer asked after the tryout. "'E got you, six to one. Now I'll show you a few things about tying up the other man an' leaving yourself free for a few jolts. Holding is barred. You want to keep working all the time. Use your elbows inside of 'is."

For a few minutes Harris gave practical demonstration of the fine art of clinch-fighting and Cole learned many things based on leverage and ju-jutsu. Here was where the science came in.

"Road-work for you," decided Harris. "Skippin' the rope for your legs. A little shadder-work. If you shape right we'll 'ave in some men your own weight to spar with. You show Murphy you're a payin' proposition an' 'e'll do the rest."

That was the meat of it all. Cole decided. He was no longer an individual sportsman, pride of his division, champion of comrades. He was a proposition—paying or failing. Well, that suited him, he told himself, and went to work with a will. Unless he could be one out of hundreds and forge to the top he would never be more than part of a stable. And it was a long, hard row. So many things entered into it. Physique first, then form, judgment of distance, skill, a cool head, courage, denial. The question of social degree did not enter his head. Here was the means to an end and he was going to make the most of it. A short cut to the long trail. The rewards would be the grubstake and good condition.

He had little trouble with the motorman. It was a "sixer," the second bout on the program. Petersen's brain was not an active one and he telegraphed his blows. It was no trouble to step inside his swings, to beat him to the punch and, after the third round, the motorman showed that his métier lay with the griphandle and not with the padded gloves and ring. He lost his temper, in the fourth, and the use of his eyesight in the fifth. In the sixth his seconds tossed in a sponge and the bout was over.

Reporters looked in on Cole while he was having his rubdown and asked questions about his experience. They had got wind of his war championship and Cole feared he had not persuaded them to ignore it. He had a strong feeling against bolstering his ring career with an overseas record. Reynolds had originally tipped that off, in friendly fashion enough.

He watched Bernstein fight furiously and cannily to victory in the main event, game as a blooded fox-terrier, never losing his head, rallying in the ninth after a swing had floored him, taking all the benefit of the count, going apparently dazed to his corner and coming out of it wearily in the tenth to suddenly smother his opponent, too eager to be careful. The plucky Hebrew showed that he had been in a fight but he grinned cheerfully as Cole congratulated him.

"I won't get such good odds next time," he said. "It was five to three tonight. They thought he'd scare me. I had too much up on that fight to lose it, take it from me."

Murphy shook hands with Cole and Hyman brought in some friends who looked him over and expressed a general opinion that Murphy had picked another winner. Murphy gave him his share of the purse, refusing a present refund of the advance.

"Later, maybe," he said. "I had a bit up on you. Next time you can get in on the betting yourself. It makes some fighters nervous and others nervy—like Berny—to have their own money up. Bread-an'-butter scrappers most of 'em. Saw your pal out in front. Said he'd wait for you outside.

"Stay the night with him, if you want to. But none of the white lights. None of the red, either. I'll take you out to Colfax tomorrow. May have some news for you."

"Why didn't you come back?" Cole asked Reynolds.

"I was feeding the reporters."

"I don't want to use that War stuff, Tom."

"Why not? They ate it up. What's the harm?"

"I don't know exactly. Put it this way. I'm a pro now, I suppose. It's business, not sport. I boxed for the fun of the thing then and—I don't know that I can make you see it, Tom. It's just the way I feel. The Army end of it is over. It's all part of the reason why I enlisted. Don't like to trade on it."

Reynolds scratched his head, frankly puzzled. Cole found he could not voice his reasons. He had volunteered from mingled motives, he supposed. When he tried to put it into words he found them too flowery for expression. He had fought for resentment against Belgian horrors, fought because his spirit answered the call to arms, because something in him, that had nothing

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in common with space or time or special cause, took up the ancient challenge. He had fought because of the drowned on the *Lusitania*, fought for liberty and against all despotism. Vaguely he had seen the path of glory and followed, seeking no bubble reputation but answering a voice that told him here duty beckoned.

Reasons shared by a multitude and not talked about. With Reynolds it was different. The Anzac had enlisted with a single purpose—the defense of the Empire.

"All right, Jimmy," said Reynolds after a while. "But I've got a notion Murphy is banking on it. Let's go eat and then we'll see if Petrie is back. I got a substitute to polish the china tonight. Boss thought I was quitting but I told him you were fighting and he warmed up. Wished he could go too. Reg'lar fight fan. That squarehead was gravy for you. I heard them talking. Lots of 'em goin' to watch out for you next time."

Cole found himself hungry and they fed at the restaurant where Reynolds proudly announced him as the winner. Then they strolled up Telegraph Hill. By some freak of temperature the fog had cleared. They found Petrie's shack closed, the notice still on the door.

BEFORE they went down they faced the bay to see the winking crimson eye of the lighthouse at Fort Point, the dim loom of Mount Tamalpais, the islands in the bay, the necklace of lights on the Oakland shore, the bright passage of the ferry boats and the illuminated tower of the Ferry Building. A steamer slid by, windows golden.

"Los Angeles boat," said Reynolds. "Smell the sea, Jimmy?"

Cole was taking it deep into his lungs. To both of them it was more than just something to be breathed. It held something familiar that aroused a yearning half beckoning, half challenge. In the savor of the sea with its damp, salty tang, there was an elixir that stirred their spirits, aroused the blend of ancestral traits, the longing handed down the many generations. As the ranges prompt the "everlasting whisper" to go forth and find, so did the night wind blowing fresh across leagues of restless ocean. There, far beyond the unseen rim where the sun had seemed to sink as the world swung round, the scattering archipelago of the Pacific Isles between, six thousand miles away lay Australia, rolling up toward a new day as the night deepened in California.

"It'll be great to get started, eh?" asked Reynolds.

"You bet," Cole answered fervently.

The tug of the unknown, the far off, was on them both and they walked back silently, each evolving imaginary pictures of their voyaging.

Cole's anxiety about any mention of himself as Sergeant Cole, Champion of the Hemlock Division was dismissed when he saw the morning papers. He got mention and that was all.

> Cole, in the six-round contest, proved entirely too good for Petersen . . . The semifinal was a tame affair though that was not the fault of Murphy's new protégé, Cole, who carried the fight to a too slow man. The sponge saved Petersen from too big a licking . . . Murphy's man, Cole, looks like a comer, making a flash against poor material in the sixer.

"I'm not quite as important as I thought myself," he said to Reynolds as he passed over the papers.

"You wait till you get goin' good. They'll be coming round to take your picture and measure your muscles before long."

Murphy said nothing about his suggested news until they reached Colfax where he called Harris into conference.

"The bout between 'Sailor' Shannon an' Eddie Martin is off, Harris," he said. "Some say Martin wants to run out but I don't see it that way of course. Shannon's a good lad, willing to mix it, game as a dog and a hog for punishment, with a wallop in either hand. He's always popular because he gives 'em a dingdong fight. He ain't been set back since any one can remember an' he's shaping up for a contender."

"For what?" asked Harris. "The heavyweight championship. 'E ain't got a chance."

"He's got a chance to be called a contender, an' while he is he's a big drawin' card. Martin's really the better man of the two but he's weedy. He don't train good, blood's always out of order. He's right about two days out of three. An' just now he's wrong. Got a boil on his neck an' it's turnin' out to be a carbuncle. Had to cut training. I heard about it last night. Got in touch with Martin's manager this mornin'. Nothin' decided on who's to go on against Shannon."

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"Well?" asked Harris. "What about it? I don't know of any one."

Murphy jerked his head in the direction of Cole and the trainer shook his in answer.

"Won't draw a house. Not unless you can cook something up, or keep that dope about Martin quiet until the night."

"Can't do that—about Martin—but I've got a scheme to pull the crowd, providin' you think Cole's good enough to make a showing."

Harris ran both hands through his hair and vigorously scratched the back of his scalp with all ten fingers, his forehead puckered.

"Twelve days orf," he said. "Twelve days! I dunno. Shannon's a slugger an' 'e knows the game. 'E'll be a big fav'rite."

"I've thought of that. I don't know I can get Cole on. He shaped well last night. But——"

" 'E's an unknown!"

"Yeh. But I can manage that end of it. What do you think?"

Neither of them had asked him what he thought about it, Cole told himself. Perhaps he was not the best judge, perhaps the worst, but he fancied he should have some word in the affair. Evidently he had a chance to substitute in a final. That was luck. There would be a good purse in it. And he had the say anyhow, he had not yet signed with Murphy for the next fight.

"Why, 'e might," conceded Harris. "You'll 'ave to get me a couple of heavies for him to spar with an' you'll 'ave to take a chance on 'im goin' stale for 'e'll sure 'ave to work like blue blazes."

"That's all I want to know. Cole, I may get you this fight. A rare chance for you if we can land it."

"What's in it?"

"There's the Yank again. You ought to have been a banker, Cole. Shannon was to have got a thousand berries guarantee, win or lose. Eddy Martin gets a holdout of two-fifty for expenses, if he loses, an' a chance at a good slice if he wins. But he's out of it. You see this is twelve rounds, Cole, an' its the finals. It ain't a whale of an affair but its a program we get up once a month over on the south side of the slot. They turn out good if the attraction is right an' they want a real fight for their money."

"Have to be a pretty good house to pay Shannon that much on a loser's end."

"He's a drawin' card. Good for double that in the box-office."

"How about me? They hardly know I'm in town."

"I'll attend to that end of it, providin' I can get you on at all. You attend to the fightin' part of it, I'll look out for the publicity. I'm takin' a long chance on you an' you don't have to tackle it unless you want to. Shannon'll weigh close to a hundred an' ninety. If you win it'll make you. If you lose it's curtains for quite a stretch. You'll likely go into the ring a one to two shot."

"You going to bet on me?"

Murphy laughed.

"That depends on how you shape, Cole. A man don't always back his own horse to win and there's no place money in this game. I wont even know till tonight whether you get the showing. Why?"

"If you do, I'd like you to get two to one for me. I'm like Bernstein: I'm in this for the money. Show me a chance to double my money and I'll fight like the devil not to lose it."

Murphy nodded.

"All right, Cole. I'll do that little thing. It's a good line, too, for you to be backin' yourself." He stopped talking abruptly. "Better sign this contract, Cole. If we can't bring off the fight it's no good anyway."

There was nothing out of the way in the agreement though Cole read it carefully. It seemed funny to him that he should be so suddenly made principal in a final. Probably, as Murphy said, the program was not supposed to introduce first-notchers but it would have to be a good-sized crowd to cover those guarantees and leave profit enough for the promoters, who would, he was quite sure, get a lion's share. He might be able to hold Shannon, even to win from him. He was not so sure of his own prowess since Harris had showed him where he was lacking, but he was confident of making a fair showing. The question was why should the crowd believe he could, on the flash he had made against Peterson.

However, there was no doubt that Murphy knew his business. The contract merely bound him to fight Sailor Shannon under the management of Murphy within thirty days from date. If he lost he would get seventy per cent. of two hundred and fifty dollars. If he won he would get the same cut of

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seven hundred and fifty. Shannon was the card, having a record of wins that looked well in the papers.

"We'll get more if we put Shannon away," said Murphy, cleverly coupling Cole's fortunes with his own though Cole was certain that Murphy counted on his main profits from the gate. "But he's made his showin' an' you're only just hatched from the amatoor egg. Well, I'll do the best I can an' I'll phone Harris some time tonight."

"It's O.K." Harris announced at the breakfast table. "Murphy fixed it. Here's where we get busy. You put Shannon away, Cole, an' you'll make big money from now on."

Cole felt a trifle guilty. If he won he figured he would be able to quit and he wondered if that would be the square thing to do. It bothered him a good deal until he realized that he was getting too cocksure of victory. The bouts he had with the sparring partners produced by Harris, hasbeens who could not stand more than three fast rounds but who made Cole feel like a novice at times, took the conceit out of him and he worked doggedly to perfect his infighting tactics. Harris showed him certain methods of roughing it that Cole had no intention of using, though the trainer and the others assured him that Shannon was a pastmaster in trying to slip over a foul when he could get his opponent between him and the referee.

"He's out to win," said Harris. "There was a bloke out 'ere yesterday who's in Shannon's camp. I let him in with the rest but it means the Sailor's got a line on you. We know 'ow 'e fights. Ready? All right, Buster."

IT SEEMED to Cole that he was being trained rather for a wrestling match than for glove-fighting. On Harris' word he and his sparring partner dropped promptly into a clinch with Cole using every effort to clip and pin and ward off while he strove to use an effective battery of short-arm punches. The veterans were easily his masters at the game though he made them foolish at long-range work or in close rallies where they did not clinch. Gradually he began to learn what they knew, then to apply it.

Bernstein was temporarily in the discard. Cole was the stake horse for the time being and he was groomed and bedded and exercised and trained to the last minute. More and more men began to come out to look at him in the afternoons, friends of Murphy, most of them, known to Harris. Others were plainly professionals of sorts, trainers' assistants, rubbers, sparrers, entering on professional privilege to pass the time of day and eye Cole as he went through his program. He did not seem to arouse their violent interest. A moment or so of critical inspection seemed to content them and they turned to talk with each other in a jargon of slang. Every day Murphy came himself, sooner or later. Once he saw Cole weigh in and gave emphatic approval. The scales marked a gain.

"Every pound we get this way means punch and power to stay," said Harris. " 'Is main trouble was he didn't have any reserve at the start. But 'e's shapin' now. An' 'e's goin' to bother Shannon, no end. I've got a 'undred to go on 'im, myself."

That determination to bet was the hallmark of approval, Cole thought. He knew nothing of the actual state of the odds. Harris did not seem to take a paper and Cole did not miss the news with his steady work through the day that left him ready for bed and long, deep sleep at an early hour.

Two days before the fight Harris lightened the program.

"Don't want you to get stale," he said. "You've gone as far as you can go, this trip. Take it easy."

In the afternoon a visitor came out who made it a personal visit. It was Hagerty of the Olympic Club. He had a long chat with Harris, then watched Cole punching the bag. After a rub and shower he was waiting for a talk.

"Murphy's playing you up in great shape," he said. "Figures on makin' a killin' at the gate. He's a wise, wise bird the way he handles it. From what Harris tells me an' the way you look you'll give 'em a run for their money. Seen your picture in the Bulletin?"

He handed over a paper that had a wide celebrity with its sporting page and Cole gazed with annoyance at his own presentment, a half-tone in an ornamental frame of pen and ink reproduction that tied up with the headline that ran across the top of the inner page.

SOLDIER CHAMPION CHALLENGES SAILOR SHANNON

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The caption under the picture was:

Sergeant Jimmy Cole Champion Heavyweight of Hemlock Division

"That's how you got your chance," went on Hagerty. "There's the Presidio crowd all back of you, naturally, with the fight set right after pay day. Then there's the gang from Mare Island and the Pacific Squadron due tomorrow. Murphy is a fox. I don't know how much of a sailor Shannon is—served a short enlistment in the boiler-room, they tell me—but it's enough to put a handle on his name an' give all the Navy crowd something to yell for. You'll pull a bigger house than Martin would."

Cole said nothing but his face was set as he read through the exaggerated publicity stuff. He had thought little of it when a cameraman asked him to pose the day previously; he had fancied that Murphy had forgotten his war record, or made light of it, but here it was played up to bring in more dollars at the gate, to create a rivalry between paying factions. Here was the reason for Murphy having the contract signed before the fight was actually decided upon and also the reason why he had been selected to face Shannon. Murphy thought he had a chance to win, of course, but the main thing was to ensure the box-office receipts. If Cole failed, that was the end of him.

He wondered whether Murphy would have so matched him if he had signed the year's contract? It didn't matter much. He couldn't undo the damage. And, if the boys out at the Presidio were looking forward to him doubling up their wagers—small enough, in all probability—why he would do his darnedest to see that they realized. After all, it took off some of the curse of fighting merely as a "proposition." He would be the representative of friends if not actual comrades.

"Harris tells me you're fit as he can make you," Hagerty went on. "He'll be in your corner with two lads he can trust. Otherwise I'd offer to be there myself and see you through."

"That's mighty good of you, Hagerty."

"Cole, I told you the gamblers had spoiled the game. They're a bunch of jackals who wouldn't put their fists up to a cripple, most of 'em, and they'll do anything crooked to win. If they can, they get at the man, if not they job him, anything to gip the crowd an' let 'em clean up. Bigger the stakes the dirtier the clean-up.

"They rung in a bottle-holder in Billy Meehan's corner the time he fought 'Lefty' Rogers. Rogers was a Native Son and the big favorite. It looked like he ought to win and the odds were on him. The gamblers figured on easy money, so they bet he'd win before the sixth and they got odds an' a whole lot of Los Angeles money, where Meehan came from.

"Rogers had been playin' the high life game. Meehan starts to hand him a lacing after the third. The gamblers weren't half as surprized as they pretended to be. They had a line on Rogers but he was a drawin' card an', unless a fight is a popular one, there ain't much bettin'. So Rogers makes a hard carry of it in the fifth, knowing there was money back of him to win in the next round an' tryin' to give them his best. I don't believe he was in the deal for a minute, mind you, at that. A good, clean lad except for bein' a fool around the cabarets an' likin' folks to stare when he rolled up in his car.

"He caught Meehan a good clip or two. It was his round an' Meehan went back to his corner with the flag down. The corner man puts a drop or two of dope—amyl nitrate it was—on a sponge and, while he's pretendin' to get the blood off Meehan's face, he hold it over his nose. It takes about five whiffs of that stuff to put a man to the bad. Meehan comes out groggy with his pump poundin' an' sick at the stomach. A kid could have put him out. Rogers did.

"Now there's goin' to be a wad of money up on this scrap. It ain't so much you an' Shannon, though they're lookin' for a good mix—it's Navy against Army an' they'll bet their shirts. They figure Shannon to win. Your war record don't mean much to a pro. The fact you're an ex-soldier means a lot to the other soldiers. The gamblers'll have to put up odds. It's five to two now. An' they always like to make sure. I don't say they'll start anything an' Harris is straight as a string. But that's the worst of the game an' there's no harm in puttin' you wise."

Cole thanked him. He was liking the fighting game less and less, was keener to get out of it. After Murphy's exploitation of him he felt under no obligations. Instead he wondered which way Murphy was going to bet.

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"I've got fifty dollars," he said. "I wish you'd get it on for me, Hagerty, if it isn't asking too much of you."

"That's the stuff," said Hagerty. "I'll place it. An' I don't mind tellin' you I'm bettin' the same way. Listen, don't you carry it to Shannon. He'll do that. Got to, as favorite. He's fond of himself, too, is Shannon. He'll try to wear you down. Bull you into a corner or against the ropes. Keep your eyes peeled for the amount of room ahead of you an' get away when you think you're gettin' pushed for room. Play for the body. Shannon don't like it. You could whack at his jaw with a hammer an' not worry him, but his wind ain't the best in the world. At that he's a comer if he had a stiffer trainer. So far he's been winnin' too regular. Thinks he's good enough as he is. Fine-built chap but no man was ever given hard enough belly muscles to stand a drumming, not by Nature. You got to build 'em up. So long, Cole, an' good luck. I'll see you on the night, before you go in."

Cole told Reynolds about it the morning of the fight. The Anzac had got a day off and was spending it at Colfax.

"They call us the 'principals,' " said Cole. "But we rank the same as a pair of pit bulls or a couple of game-cocks. I'm through with it, after this, Tom. And I can't afford to lose. If I do I get a hundred and seventy-five bucks, less the thirty Murphy advanced, and I lose fifty more. But I stand to win six hundred and that ought to get us under way."

"I'm not rich myself," said Reynolds, ruefully. "But I'm putting it all up on you. It'll help some. Petrie's back. Saw him on Kearney Street yesterday afternoon. He'll be at the fight, he thinks. Wants to see us tomorrow night. He seems a bit down in the mouth, though he said he was in funds. Ready to talk over starting for the mine. If you win, Jimmy, I quit my job. Chap's got to have leather hands to stand that one. Look at mine?"

He held out his wrinkled members with a laugh.

"I'll bet that when a dishwasher has a vacation," he said, "he don't touch soap and water for a week. You said you weren't working out today. Let's go for a hike."

Two men came out to Colfax in the afternoon, hard-featured, cold of eye, sporting of apparel. Harris was in town with Murphy and they got through to Cole easily enough as he came back from his walk.

"You're going to have a packed house," one of them said to Cole, "though I don't suppose Murphy's letting you in on a percentage. Or any fortune for a guarantee. That ain't right, considering you draw all the Presidio that can get away. Lucky if you get five hundred," he went on with a shrewd glance.

"You're new to the game, Cole. Let me give you a tip. You carry the fight to Shannon. The wise ones are betting one to two he stops you before the seventh. They used to call him 'Seven Round' Shannon, you know.

"Wouldn't hurt you any for a beginner to have it end in the seventh. It might pay you better than winning."

"I'm betting on myself to win," said Cole shortly.

Hagerty had made him suspicious of friendly strangers at this stage of the game.

The other winked at him.

"You're not so crazy," he said. "But don't raise the ante too strong. You weren't too flush when Murphy took you up. I saw you that day at the Club," he added.

"What do you want?" Cole asked.

"It's on the other foot, kid. What do you want?"

Cole looked at Reynolds.

"Open the door, Tom," he said.

"What's the idea, Cole? We're putting sure money in your pocket."

"So you can fill yours. Get out."

"This way, gents," Reynolds put in with a mock bow.

The pair looked uncertainly at each other, then at Cole's grim face.

"You're a sucker, Cole," said the first. "You ain't in this game for your health. If you are, you won't have it after Shannon gets through with you tonight."

"Shut the door, Tom."

They stood within its scope and, as Reynolds closed it, they stepped out hastily.

"A fine pair of crooks, Jimmy."

"I don't like being taken for one," said Cole. "It makes you sick. Harris is straight as a string. So's Hagerty and I believe the chaps who fight are, or would be, if they were left alone. I suppose it's only the second-raters they go after."

"I've heard of big fights being cooked, Jimmy."

"Well, this one won't be. A fine bunch of

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sportsmen. We'll give the boys a fight for their money, Tom."

THE Pavilion was jammed, floor and gallery, with a mob that was half civilian, half Army and Navy. Cole had got a ringside seat for Reynolds and he stayed in Cole's dressing-room till Harris thrust him out. Hagerty paid his visit. He had got Cole's money down. Cole felt a little nervous, overstrung a little in his determination to win.

"Time to bandage, Cole," said Harris. "Your hands ain't any too good. Don't bust 'em tryin' to crack his jaw. Semifinal's on now."

Murphy came in with Hyman and a couple of men, watching the bandaging.

"Nervous?" asked the announcer.

"I won't be after the bell," said Cole.

"You'll get a fine reception. The doughboys are out strong tonight."

Cole said nothing. He supposed Murphy was within his rights about the advertising.

"There won't be any monkey bisness about Shannon makin' you wait," said Murphy. "The crowd won't stand for it. Come in as soon as I send for you."

Hagerty had brought a parcel with him, a dressing gown of faded blue.

"That used to be Jim Corbett's," he said, "when he boxed up at the club. He left it behind him an' we've kept it as a souvenir. Hope it brings you luck."

Cole had not bought one. All his money was up and he hadn't cared to ask for an advance. Harris had brought one for him but he preferred Hagerty's mascot.

The messenger came as the shouts for the semifinal decision subsided. Harris gathered his two helpers with their first aid equipment and they passed out under the gallery and down a long aisle to the ring. It seemed as if half the house rose to him. The shouts banished his nervousness and he took his chair, rubbing his shoes in the resin box, surveying the packed place. The lights were brilliant, the hall hot, but there was no smoking.

Shannon came on in a gown of green, his adherents cheering. He stood in the ring, jerking his close-cropped head in answer, ignoring Cole.

The usual ceremonies followed swiftly: Photographers, a pose, reporters looking up, pads ready, the house shifting in their seats. Murphy's booming voice. Some introductions of challengers, new gloves taken from their box and fitted on, bandages examined by both sides. Instructions, with Shannon sneering confidently.

He was built square of body, little difference between chest and waist line. There was an anchor tattooed on one brawny arm, a knotted rope on the other. His legs were massive and his muscles showed prominently.

"Let 'er go," roared Murphy, and the corners were cleared as the two glided out, a shudden hush falling over the house.

Shannon advanced with apparent caution and suddenly changed it to a rush. His arms, countering Cole's left, jarring against his right, were hard as seasoned oak. There was a smart rally, with Shannon boring in, and Cole found himself skilfully herded toward a corner. He fought his way out and into a clinch, thanking Harris for his lessons as he staved off the sailor's efforts to clamp his arms and got in a hard jolt to the ribs, with one in return that warned him of Shannon's ability to put his weight behind a punch.

The darting referee worked round them, calling on them to break. The sailor unwound cleverly. He had put his weight on Cole and as the latter leaped lightly away he grinned. The smile faded as Cole made a quick return, a trick that he had practised often with good effect, and, right foot forward, got inside Shannon's guard with a smart jolting blow high on the jaw and a hard drive to the stomach as the sailor's haymaker ruffled his hair on his backward spring. The blows went home with a sharp smack. A crimson patch was spreading on Shannon's side.

A shout went up, stilled instantly as Shannon rushed. He took a jab on the mouth without wincing and hammered fiercely, overmatching Cole's superior boxing, slamming in two telling blows, one of which sent Cole reeling, the sailor after him.

The clout landed on the nose and the force of it jarred Cole until his knees weakened, while the men of the Navy stood up and yelled. He broke ground and Shannon followed. There were shouts of advice and derision but he could distinguish nothing. The blood had not started but he was dizzy from the bludgeoning smash and, when the bell sounded, he paused uncertainly before he found the direction of his corner. As he walked to it he caught a phrase or two that

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stung him. He was being called a dub. He could sense the scorn of the audience; he saw vaguely upturned faces that were gazing upward with a disappointed contempt. Harris caught his arms, thrust him in the chair, talking to him.

"That's all right, Cole. Now 'e thinks you're easy. Feel 'im out. Jab an' keep away. Don't mix it. Eleven more rounds, old top."

Water on his face. A drink from a bottle. Fresh air from a vigorously wielded fan. Harris massaging his legs. The gong.

"Fight 'im pritty," called Harris as he dived through the ropes.

The crowd had come for a fight and they began to demand it as Cole kept away. He found he could jab and retreat without much risk of an exchange. Several times Shannon's right whizzed within an inch or two of his face but it never reached him. But this was boxing. Now and then he heard the shouted complaints.

"Don't run away, doughboy!" "Oh, you Champeen!" "He's scared of the sailor!"

Shannon continued to come at him, angry at the evasion. Once the sailor stopped short in the center of the ring, inviting a rally.

"Fight, you blighter," he shouted. "I won't hurt yer. I just want to put you to sleep."

The ringside caught the jest and the crowd passed it on while they laughed and a hiss or two sounded. Cole kept pecking away. Shannon's lips were puffy, he was snuffing blood. Cole's own nose was stuffed and he could not breathe easily. But he fought the round out in his own way and came back strong to his corner. From across the ring the sailor glared at him, exchanging remarks with his seconds, laughing.

"Tryin' to get your goat," whispered Harris. "You're gettin' *'is*. Keep on sparring."

In the middle of the round Cole had to accept a clinch. His glove had slid over Shannon's wet and slippery shoulder and the sailor closed in. He held and the referee warned him. Then he ripped in a low blow and the pain of it stung Cole beyond discretion. For a moment the two stood leaning on each other, slugging. Cole's blood was up and he felt nothing of the punishment he was getting but he heard Shannon grunt as he backed off.

Cole let loose a swing that caught the sailor flush on the jaw. He shook his head and fought back a little wildly as Cole jumped in and just as the bell sounded, set one hard on the spring of the ribs and Shannon was glad to get into his chair.

The house was one blended murmur, rising and falling. They were sitting down, beginning to hope they were going to see a real fight after all.

"Outfought 'im, lad," said Harris. "Look at 'im puff. That was a prime soak in the bread-basket. But be careful."

Suddenly he straightened, one hand in the air, appealing to the referee. A second had dipped a wet hand in the resin box and applied it to Shannon's glove, crushing the sharp stuff into the soft leather."

"Chuck that," shouted Harris. "Wipe off that resin."

With the gallery catcalling, the floor sitters shuffling as they rose, the referee walked over and inspected Shannon's mitt. The second protested it was an accident. He had put his hand into the box while kneeling and started to relace the glove without noticing. The official ordered the glove wiped off. He could not lay much stress on the incident. But Harris was indignant.

"Look out for 'is mucker tricks from now on," he cautioned.

"He hit me low last round," said Cole. "Hurt a bit but it's all right now. That's what made me mix it. I got sore."

"Lummy if I don't think it does you good," said Harris. "But go easy, laddy, go easy. It's a long road to the larst bell."

Cole told himself to beware of overconfidence but he was beginning to find himself, warming to his work, sure that the machine run by his will was working properly. There had been a conference in Shannon's corner and the sailor shifted his style, coming out, as the bell rang, well-covered, crouching almost in a squat. He held his ground in the center of the ring once he had reached it, refusing to lead but sticking out his jaw, his face twisted to a leering grin, in mute challenge to Cole. He was clowning it but there was plainly some purpose in the background.

Cole feinted twice at the proffered jaw and danced away. The third time he struck swiftly as a cat, downward with his left, up with his right, two almost simultaneous blows that caught Shannon under the jaw

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and crushed the end of his nose down on his lips. They stung and the sailor shot suddenly out of the squat as if there had been steel springs set in his mighty hams and great calves. He lunged, with a swiping blow to Cole's ribs, another to the neck, and Cole found himself fighting hard in vicious exchanges while the noise of the crowd was like the rush and retreat of sea on shingle all about them.

He kept his head. If he must take—and the force of Shannon's leaping rush had put him on the defensive and retreat about the ring—he could return. He traded a short-arm jolt on the side of his jaw for a straight punch that targeted hard and true in the pit of the stomach. Shannon's mouth opened. Cole could see the brief agony in his eyes but he seemed immune to ordinary pain and turned savagely with gasped oaths that Cole shut off with an uppercut. He knew the sailor's jaw was adamant and his own knuckles none too tough but he could not always reach the mark he had set and, despite the published fact that Shannon had never been knocked out by that route, he could see that he was not taking to it.

It brought the crowd to its feet again, with shouts for Cole. It was spectacular work and it meant points. The idea had already come to Shannon that he might not be able to put away this amateur. Sullenly he retreated as the force of his rush spent itself, lashing out with both hands. They were both tired but the house was cheering when they broke away at the gong.

This was an even round. Cole had a margin on the third, Shannon the two first.

Shannon, a hurtling mass of energy, primed with fury, his eyes hard as flint, charged from the corner. Cole dodged him as a matador evades the bull. He handed out a straight drive as he sidestepped and the blow sounded on the sailor's ribs like a drum. Shannon whirled around and Cole met him, ducking a swing. This time he laughed at the other for his miss and Shannon let out a fighting bellow and flung himself at Cole.

He fought in a mad lust of passion. He struck at Cole's jaw with the heel of his hand, he rammed his cheek with an elbow and, as he closed, he brought up his knee with deliberate intent to foul. This in a hurricane of action, Cole covering up to weather the storm. What the referee saw was hard to tell. The scribes were hard at it, one man writing with his eyes on the ring, another dictating to an assistant at a telegraph key.

Cole was hurt, bruised, swept along. His aim had been to prevent Shannon from getting set and here he had been caught napping. The man was a whirlwind of speed and strength but Cole, head down in the hollow of his right upflung arm, his left across his stomach, told himself that Shannon had to slow up, that, if he could keep some strength, launch it at the right moment of failing attack he might turn the tables with a vengeance.

Then the ropes touched him on back and knees and tautened as they stretched under his backflung weight. Shannon was still hammering, with open mouth that uttered inarticulate sounds of rage. He had his man against the ropes at last, not quite defenseless yet but hugging himself, too smothered with the attack to guard with any idea of where the blows were coming from.

They were yelling for the Sailor, calling for the Sailor, shouting for him to finish it.

"Sailor! Sailor! Sailor!"

Men stood brandishing their arms, beseeching him to put over the winning punch, wild with excitement like hounds when they close in on the fox.

The voices worked into a sort of rhythm, captured, as a baseball crowd will be, by a sibilant phrase.

"Put him to sleep, Sailor. Put him to sleep!"

The touch of the ropes had acted on Cole like the feel of a lariat on an unbroken horse. It meant danger and defeat with Shannon still on top of him, still smothering him with blow on blow. He hadn't been hurt much, his breath was intact, his head clear. His ribs ached, a cut had been opened over his left eye and one ear was bleeding.

He heard the shouting and knew he must look a sorry spectacle but he was far from beaten if he could get out of the hole. The ropes began to close in on him, to slip up on his shoulders, to break his knees at the back. It all occurred in a few seconds—the knowledge of the trap—the swift resolution to take a chance.

He dropped his guard and saw the flash of triumph in the sailor's eyes as he swung for the jaw. Only broken strength accounted for that lowered defense to Shannon, and he sent in a right and left hook.

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They met only air. Cole, undamaged, had ducked, though he had to place part of his body beyond the ropes, standing on the extreme edge of the raised platform.

With all his force he whanged at Shannon's exposed belly, indrawn, as the sailor set himself for the finishing blows. His knuckles felt Shannon's floating ribs through the padding of the gloves. There was desperate power back of the punches, they knocked the wind out of the sailor, the gleam from his eyes; they partly lifted him off his feet. With his face gray as he gasped for breath with lungs that would not function, Shannon perforce fell aside and Cole went through the opening like a halfback through the gap in the lines, pivoting.

Now Shannon was his target and he made the most of it.

A smash over the kidneys, another over the diaphragm as the sailor's arms hung heavy as lead, their nervous force short-circuited.

Shannon sunk slowly to his knees. The referee jumped in between him and Cole. Cole stood back. He knew that he had put all he had into those punches. If they didn't do the trick he was done. One wrist felt weak—the left—and a sharp pain had zigzagged in his right side as he struck. It had passed but there was soreness inside. Shannon's smashes had been terrific.

To the crowd he looked like a brute of murderous menace with his face a mask of blood that had dripped down on chest and shoulders and been spread into great smears. Under the mask he smiled for he saw the look of a dead fish in Shannon's half-closed eyes while one limp arm slid outside the lower rope, the heavy head sagged onto it, the muscles of the big body refused to function and the sailor slumped over on his side, quivered a little and lay still, one hand flabby on the padded cord and the referee counting with swinging arm and finger that seemed to point half-accusingly at the prone pugilist on every downward stroke.

"Eight—nine—ten—and out!"

THE referee swung about from the loser and caught at Cole's right arm, elevating it while the crowd milled in their seats before they broke their places and made, some for the exits, some for the ring, where officious police were already entering.

The twinge of pain stabbed Cole again as the referee semaphored his decision. The official saw the involuntary grimace he made.

"Hurt?" he asked.

"Shannon broke a rib, I think. Feels like it."

Harris caught the words and ordered the assistant seconds to ward off the excited winners that reached for the man who had made their bets good, had demonstrated the superior fighting power of their arm of the service. There were glum looks and sour faces from the wise men as Harris piloted his charge to the dressing-room and sent Bernstein, who had bustled in for congratulations, to find a doctor quietly.

"All you need is a bit of plarster, lad," he said as he made a brief examination. "But you may as well 'ave it put on right. 'Ow about this wrist?"

He whistled as he looked at it, shaking his head.

"Looks like its all orf for you for a bit," he announced and the convenient surgeon, a close follower of the fights, confirmed his opinion.

"We'll X-ray it," he said. "Carpal bone misplaced, maybe cracked. You've got a busted rib. Time the wrist feels better you'll have forgotten the other. Meanwhile—adhesive."

"The best scrap I've seen this year," he said as he warmed the tape and began to apply it. "Bar none. Some of 'em'll be hollering their heads off because it only lasted five rounds but that last one was worth a dozen. I thought you were gone, Cole. Don't see now how you got out."

"He was hitting me like a trip-hammer," Cole said, and saw that he was talking to a crowded dressing-room, Murphy, Hagerty, Reynolds, reporters, fight followers, the boxers of the preliminaries and their handlers. "I was due for a back dive through the ropes or hang on to the top one and let him slug me silly. So I gave him a chance for my head. I figured he'd think me all out of steam and I knew I wasn't. He was careless and not expecting a duck so he missed and I connected.

"Harris won the fight for me. He put me in shape to stand the gaff and told me where to play for with Shannon."

A reporter nodded approval and pressed forward. But Murphy stepped in front of the chair where the doctor was bandaging Cole's chest.

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"He's hurt," he said. "Finished the fight with a busted wrist and rib—and won it. Now you fellers get out an' give the doc a chance."

The room cleared slowly, Hagerty one of the last to go. Cole was comfortable enough, a bit constricted as to chest and clumsy of wrist, forced to forego a regular rubdown.

"Better go back to Colfax tonight," said Murphy. "Take better care of you out there. You'll be all right sooner than you think. You put up a mighty good fight, Cole. Used your head and you showed you could take it. Here's your money and seventy-five on your bet."

"I've collected that," said Cole. "I put my money up with Hagerty."

"You did? Well, I put it up for you just the same. It's yours."

"I don't see it that way, Murphy. I reckon I'll stay in town tonight. I might as well tell you I'm through with the game. I don't like the way it's played."

Murphy's jaw dropped and his eyes widened, then narrowed.

"Through? When you've just got a chance to do something for yourself—let alone me. You must be crazy!"

Harris' face reflected the expression of Murphy's. Reynolds grinned at Cole.

"What do you care how the game is played so you cash in?" asked Murphy. "You can play your end of it straight. Nobody askin' you to do anything but fight your best, is there?"

"Two chaps came out to Colfax this afternoon and wanted me to lie down in the seventh. Reynolds here was with me. They wanted to know how much I wanted to do it. Said the betting was that way with odds offered to them instead of them giving it. I showed them the gate. I'm through, Murphy. I don't like being advertised through the War. I didn't go into it to get advertising."

Murphy stared at him then gave a short laugh.

"Of all the fighting fools!" he exclaimed. "I've seen several kinds but you're a new one to me. Just a plain sucker. You'd never have made a champion but you could have cleaned up more'n you will any other way. Game ain't sweet enough for you, eh? I suppose you'd do away with the betting. What are you, trainin' for the ministry on the side?"

"I bet on myself, Murphy," said Cole quietly. "I bet on Cole to win the fight. Did you?"

"That's none of your —— bisness," answered Murphy angrily, his face redder than ever.

"He bet on Shannon," said Reynolds. "I saw the money pass and heard them kidding him."

"Maybe it isn't my business. Anyway I've won one final for you whether you cashed in on it outside the box-office or not. I don't suppose you've lost anything over me. If you have it's not my fault. Here's the advance I had from you."

Murphy waved it away but Cole, dressed now, left it on the table. The announcer held out his hand.

"No hard feelings, Cole. If you ever want to come back to the game and are in shape, see me."

They shook hands all round and as Cole went out of the door with Reynolds he heard Murphy exclaiming to Harris.

"A fighting fool for fair!"

"Wonder what kind of a fool he'd think you if he knew we were going after a gold mine," said Reynolds. "I don't see Petrie. Guess he got tired waiting. Let's go eat and I'll hand in my resignation. There's another chap after the job and I've got an idea he needs it. Got a wife and a couple of kids."

CHAPTER III

PETRIE

PETRIE'S shack on Telegraph Hill was hardly worthy of a better name but the rafters of the unceiled roof-peak had been treated with color and acid that gave them a weathered appearance, the boarded walls, handled in the same way, were interesting with strips of gaily printed Oriental muslin, with tapa cloths, odds and ends of weapons ranging from the Civil War to South Sea clubs and spears and with unframed sketches—mostly of hills and water in vivid sunshine. There was a fireplace blazing cheerily with driftwood. Odd Chinese lanterns and curious candlesticks of wrought iron supplied light that mellowed the interior, while the furniture consisted of comfortable odds and ends with one ancient but comfortable davenport in front of the fire, packed with cushions of infinite variety and design.

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On this Cole and Reynolds sprawled luxuriously with cigaret and pipe. Petrie sat on a carved stool to one side of the fire, prodding at the burning wood so as to get the full benefit of the colored flames born from the sea crystals. The artist was short of stature, barely half-way between five and six feet, though his shoulders were broad enough. He sported a closely clipped mustache and beard, his hair, on the contrary, being longer than prevailing custom. He had a hawkish nose, full lips, hazel eyes and all outgrowth was of a coppery hue.

He was fully charged with vivacity, vitality and wit, aided by a natural good humor and Cole congratulated Reynolds and himself upon the third member of the expedition. He had been a bit dubious about the artist at first, with a general theory that the type was irresponsible, lazy, moody and inclined to be selfish. But Petrie was vigorous enough, physically and mentally. He possessed qualities that the other two lacked and he more than fitted in.

That he had his eccentricities was clear in the pegleg cut of his claret-colored corduroys, the crimson bow tie of softly flowing silk under the collar of his shirt of brown wool. That he had moods of exaltation and despondency was proven before their meeting was an hour old, but the artist had a buoyant soul and a merry way of laughing at himself, a whimsical method of looking at life that was just what the trio needed. Cole was inclined to be commercial where ways and means were concerned, insistent upon the practical, once he came to believe in the existence of the gold. Reynolds was true blue, full enough of enthusiasm and with all the pluck in the world to go through with a thing but a little short in initiative, a little slow in mental process.

Petrie was to be the kick in the brew compounded of the qualities of the three. He was versatile and he was spontaneously clever. His originality bubbled up continually, like a living spring, gaining inspiration from the passing show.

"There is nothing in the world like a fire, fellows," he announced. "It is the only thing that man has handed down from the time when we were lusty barbarians instead of effete products of supercivilization. It is our link with the primitive.

"That's the one primary thing we've hung on to down all the generations. Symbol of fellowship. One flash of firelight makes the whole world kin. Logs burning and men seeing things in the flames. A thousand years ago some barbaric, sea-raiding or cattle-stealing ancestor of mine looked into a fire like that and since him, all down the line, my forebears have done the same thing. Firebrands on the hearth of Time.

"It harks back to the time when man first used it, maybe from a forest fire. Up to that time he had been deadly afraid of it with the other animals. Now he conquered fear with fire, the fear of the dark, of his enemies, of prowling saber-tooth tigers or long-tusked mastodons. It changed his diet and made him independent of the climate. It brought the wild dog creeping into him to be his servant, like Perro there, snoozing on the Navajo. He'll wake and blink at the flames and go to sleep again to dream of wild hunts after great tree lizards of the age when he ran in a pack, before the ice shifted and the glacial age resorted mankind.

"Fire on the home hearth, or along the desert trail! Fire in a Zulu kraal with the witch-doctors cavorting about it. Watch-fires and beacons, signal fires, fires burning all over the world and men about them. Man's best friend, better than the sun working only union hours.

"Look what man has done to it, thinking he's civilized. Shut it up to make hissing steam in gilt radiators, losing its cheer and inspiration. Done the same thing to dogs, for that matter, twisted their bodies, docked their tails, changed the shape of their skulls and jaws, turned 'em into pets except where the breed has hung on to the old spirit. Man's going the same way. Thank the little gods we three are going out into the wilds.

"Let's have a drink to the trip. They are still treading out the grape in Little Italy, right here on the hill, and I've got a demijohn of red wine.

"I'm in funds. I've sold the boat. Got enough out of her to pay my debts. I hope the shock of it will give some of my creditors heart disease.

"I don't own this dump," he rattled on, producing the demijohn, slinging it by the handle over his shoulder and pouring out the forbidden juice. "I've rented it. Nothing much here of mine except the sketches and the cushions. I don't know what I'll do with them unless I return 'em to the original

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donors—if I remember which is which.

"The cushions you have sent to me, dear hearts,
"Have been a source of ease and rest to me.

"Drink hearty. *A la vôtre!* To the Antipodes. To gold!"

His gay nonsense was infectious. It was his evening. Cole and Reynolds said little, Reynolds glancing at Cole occasionally as if to arouse recognition of his judgment in the inclusion of the artist.

"What about the paintings?" asked Cole.

Petrie made a grimace.

"Daubs, most of 'em. I'll sacrifice 'em on the altar of our friendship to propitiate—what was the name of that Australian *juju*, Tom?"

"Kvingan!"

Petrie began to take the sketches from the walls despite the protests of the others.

"What, should I allow them to be carted off by a junk dealer, to have 'em used to stop an empty window pane or bought for fifty cents by the unappreciative? They are my children, such as they are. Shall I orphan them, cast 'em upon the charity of an inartistic public? They won't buy 'em. They sha'n't have 'em for nothing. Look at 'em blaze. Hours of work, hopes and fears, tubes of paint all going up in smoke. I invoke the god of Good Fortune to accept the burned offering.

"I have foresworn Art. Until we return triumphant. Then I shall go back to Paris and study. I don't even know how to draw properly, much less paint. I was a fool ever to leave Paris.

"I was there during the war. I enlisted to fight and they set me to camouflage, daubing cloth by the mile to deceive the airmen. Making designs of crazy patchwork for the ships. That's where the Cubists got their start. Most of 'em are camouflage men gone mad."

"What made you come back?" asked Cole.

He found himself wondering—if the artist's funds were to pay his debts—where his share of the expense was coming from. He mentally kicked himself for his Yankee trait and put the question.

"A girl," said Petrie ruefully. "Girls have been my bane. We won't meet with any in the Queensland wilds, Reynolds?"

"None that you'd look at," grinned the Anzac. "Wait till you see 'em."

"*Les belles sauvages?* No, I don't think they'll entice me, from your descriptions.

"Let's talk about something else," he went on, feeding the rest of his sketches to the fire where they curled in protest, the landscapes blackening, going up at last in spurts of flame and thick smoke.

"What's this picture, Petrie?" asked Cole.

It was a large canvas, the only one now left, set up on an easel beneath the north window through which they could see the stars and the ridge of Tamalpais lying against the night sky in the form of a recumbent woman.

PETRIE took a lamp, the only one in the room, removed the shade and studied the painting. Cole and Reynolds got up and stood beside him. It was a spirited attempt, showing the hills of Marin County, bronze in the Summer sunshine, the hollows deep in shadows, clusters of live-oaks here and there, trade-wind clouds in the blue sky.

"You're not going to burn that, are you?" asked Cole. "It looks good to me."

"It isn't bad. It's the best thing I've ever done. By a long shot. Made me resolve to go back to art again in Paris when we get back. No, I'm not going to burn it. But it's a sacrifice just the same. To what base uses! That, my braves, represents my share of the outfit and trip. It's sold." He heaved a deep sigh. "On one condition."

He recharged the tumblers and led the way back to the fire.

"It's a short but sad story," he went on. "There is a certain restaurateur who is establishing a chain of white-tiled creameries but, as he has some imagination, he wants to go one better over the usual decorations, which are a cross between a bathroom and the operating-room in a hospital.

"My man wants a mural to go back of the array of meats and pies and vegetables. Something local and characteristic—but not foggy. Must be bright—and not too expensive. Pal of mine introduced him to me. He saw a small sketch of this and he bargained with me with an infernal commercialism that knows nothing of buying art for art's sake.

"He said nothing of cows then—confound him. But he has a dairy. Advertises his slogan of fresh cream, milk and butter from our own ranch! And he buys the picture on one condition. That I put cows

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in the foreground—not less than ten of 'em stipulated—and all Jerseys! Cows!

"I shall do it—or rather I shall have it done. Cows are beyond me. I have a fellow painter who will distribute the herd upon the painted pastures and the canvas goes to the creamerie, after it has dried in, and we draw five hundred dollars from the cashier. Four hundred of that is my share toward our grubstake. A hundred goes to my friend the cattle artist. He has a wife and three gadgets, with another coming. The hundred replenishes his larder and appeases the doctor. So is Mammon served.

"Hereafter I take my coffee black. I loathe the sight of a cow. Australia, they tell me, runs mostly to sheep. Let's discuss the trip. There's an atlas here somewhere. When do we start, what do we carry, where do we go?"

"Expecting to take the dog with you?" asked Reynolds.

Petrie stared his surprize at such a question.

"Of course, as watchdog, hunting dog and pal. He'll smell out the blacks and keep them from chivvying us like they did you. He'll bring back bandicoots and wallabys for breakfast. Take him with us? I'll say so. What's the objection?"

"None, on my part," said Reynolds, "but all dogs entering Australia have to go into quarantine for six months. By that time we'll either be millionaires or side dishes."

Petrie's jovial face grew serious.

"Look here," he said. "I might be able to get along without Perro, at a pinch, though I'd hate to, but it's a surefire proposition that Perro can't get along without me. We've been pals ever since he was a pup, four years ago. I've told Perro things I'd never tell a man, and I've got his confidence. Why I'm that dog's god. If I quit him he wouldn't eat. I know that on account of the time I had the influenza. He camped out by the hospital. It 'ud be a toss up whether he'd die of starvation first or a broken heart if he ever got it into his head that I had actually gone back on him.

"He's bunked with me, sailed, fished, hunted, swum. Guarded my stuff. He's even held a rope when I told him to and he's laughed at some of my pictures and wagged his tail at the good ones. Fact. He feels the way I do. He's got to come along somehow."

Reynolds scratched his head. He sympathized with Petrie but he knew the inexorable laws of Australian quarantine. He looked across at Cole and shook his head.

"I suppose you fellows imagine I'm a fool to give up a gold mine on account of a dog. But Perro's different. If I threw him down I'd be the sort of chap who might throw you down. That may be artistic temperament but it's the way I feel about it."

"Easy enough to understand that," said Cole. "Isn't there some way to get around it, Tom?"

"You might be able to have him examined and then put up some sort of bond. But I don't know what liberty they'd give him. I know that there is some sort of special arrangement made by the theatrical people for vaudeville animal acts."

"Ha! I see light. Being more or less of a Bohemian, whatever that really means, I know that crowd. If there's any luck in the world there'll be an animal act booked for Australia shortly. Going over all the time. That or a circus. I'll soon find out. Perro shall go as a clown. He'll get through. He'll be lost. And we'll find each other. Or, officially, he'll die. Don't you worry about Perro for I know those ropes and we'll fix it. If I have to join the circus myself. I'll have to feed him anyway. Cheer up, Perro, all the world—that amounts to a whoop—loves a dog. You shall yet chase cassowaries and emus across the scrub. Now then, we've got enough cash to take us to Sydney and buy some of our outfit. Where do we go from there?"

REYNOLDS pointed out the route on the map, supplying names and positions where the atlas proved inadequate.

"There are coasting steamers run up to Mackay and to Townsville," he said. "Townsville is the northern end of the railroad. Sugar plantations at Mackay, cattle and sheep at Townsville. Townsville is about the limit of what you might call civilization. Next steamer stop is Dungeness at the mouth of the Herbert River, forty miles from Herbert Vale, which is our real starting point. We can go up river by boat or we can strike across country from Cardwell, twenty miles.

"But we've got to get horses if it's possible and there's more chance of getting them

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along the river at some of the sugar plantations, so I guess Dungeness is our best bet. Besides, those troopers took us back to Cardwell. Poor old Bill raved a bit before he went west, talked about gold. They knew we'd found some though we didn't have any with us. It don't take much to start a rush. They tried to pump me but I kept mum.

"But it's more than likely some beggar would recognize me. Apt to find a good many of the old crowd there. We stumbled on it by blind luck. Heard there was gold up there though none had been located. We didn't talk about what we were after, going up the river where we got our horses. It don't pay. I'm no hog and there's gold enough for twenty in sight. It may turn out to be a real field or it may be only what there is on view.

"But, if there's a rush—and there would be if it was known we were going back to where we knew there was gold, there'd be a thousand men on the ground and likely as not we'd have to take what we could get instead of the best of the claims. We might have first pick and make a bum choice.

"Up at Herbert Vale there is an abandoned cattle station. The soil along the river proved good for sugar and they gave it up. There was an old Scotchman there as keeper—likely dead by now. Beyond there it's all wild. We want to talk about anything but gold. They are bound to be curious about us and I thought we'd better say we were looking for a plantation site. That's one reason why I fancied it might be a good idea if we could get hold of some sort of sailing vessel, a small one, with Petrie here as skipper. Not only for going in but coming out with the gold. It's my notion to get out enough to let us go back to Sydney and get a real outfit for mining the place properly, if it turns out right. This first trip would be a sort of prospect. If we strike it, the quieter we keep about it till we've secured our end of it the better. We might buy a boat cheap.

"I don't know that it would take any longer than the steamer, at that. Those old coasting tubs aren't built for speed and they stop everywhere. They don't run every day by a long shot and they haven't got any real schedule. The fares are pretty steep. We should be able to sell the boat, if we aint too darned wealthy when we get through. From now on for four months the southeast trades blow steady so we'd have the wind with us."

"Sounds good to me," said Petrie. "I ought to be able to handle an offshore trip. I'm no navigator. Only an amateur but it would be good sport to do it all on our own. I vote for the boat."

"We'll land in Sydney pretty close to flat," warned Cole, though the idea of sailing fascinated him. It had been in his mind right along.

"We'd be just as flat when it comes to steamer fares, anyway," urged Reynolds. "And we've got to rake some money together for horses and for grub, and tobacco for the blacks. The question is, do you chaps want to stick around here trying to make the rest of our stake? Maybe let some one else cop the gold. I've looked up Government reports and they don't mention the Herbert River District as producing but we'd look like a lot of chumps if we were nosed out. We'd be half-way there. More than half-way. Just as good a chance of making money. Only jobs I've landed here ain't what you might call high salaried."

"This is the first picture I've sold for more than fifty dollars since I came back," put in Petrie. "You said you were through with the fighting game on the Coast, Cole."

"I've got a busted wrist and a cracked rib to heal up. That lets me out. Good chance to get well on the steamer trip."

"Let's get away from the fog," said Reynolds. "Sunshine all the time over there. Finest harbor in the world."

"Gag him!" cried Petrie. "I know those Sydney ducks once they get started. We had one with the camouflage outfit I was with. What if we do land broke? We'll be on the same side as the gold.

"The only thing that bothers me is this," he went on whimsically. "In all the treasure-seeking trips I've ever read about there has never been any trouble about getting to the spot. They just scare up a partner with a ship, or they pack their burros and start off across the desert. Don't make any difference if they are going to South America, the South Seas or the North Pole, the author always has the means of transportation doped out or else he forgets about it.

"But this is real life and we've got to hustle for our own grubstakes. Makes it all the merrier. We've got enough for the first jump. If we stick here we may go

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stony broke again. What's the odds? Let's go. How's the vote? Unanimous?

"Good! You chaps'll bunk with me from now on. Rent's paid—or will be tomorrow—up to the end of the month. We'll get most of our own chow. There's an oil stove and an oven back of that screen and if I could paint as well as I can cook, I'd be in the Salon long ago.

"Three cots back of the long curtain. Bedding enough, with the rugs. We'll live better and save money till the steamer sails. Tomorrow we'll look up bookings and I'll see about Perro. I've got to take him out for a run before we turn in. Do it any time. I don't feel sleepy. There's more wine in the jimmyjohn. Let the bowl flow."

It was close to morning before they went outside with the dog. The east was graying and the sky clear above a long tongue of fog that came thrusting in through the Golden Gate, enwrapping a fussy tug that towed a ship whose masts thrust through the mist. The hoots of early ferries blared out. They did not mind the fog. The glamour of gold was on them, the urge of youth, the flush of go-fever. Of these three the gold was the least.

Petrie broke the spell.

"The shops open early on the hill," he said. "How about a ham steak, eggs, coffee, Italian stickbread and rolls. Cantaloups to start with."

"I thought you said something about saving money," said Cole.

Petrie bent a look of mock scorn upon him.

"Avaunt, you provident and parsimonious person, avaunt! A full stomach maketh a strong heart. This is our first meal together. Because thou art stingy, shall there be no cakes and ale?"

"Bully beef, damper and tea for you after we strike the bush," said Reynolds.

"Not if I'm cook. Salmi of emu, goulash of kangaroo tail, cassowary soup. Also po'k an' beans, flapjacks and coffee. Tea? A brew for old women. I'm hungry as a Spring bear. Come on."

TO BE CONTINUED

SENTIMINT

by Charles Tenney Jackson

Author of "The Sign of the Oolah," "Hooley's Hen Hastener," etc.

"TINK?"

"Tunk, seh!"

"Oh—Tank!"

The Rev. Lafayette B. Tuttle extended his hand.

"Beg pardon. I didn't get the name. Yes—Colonel Tank——"

"Colonel T. Sambola Tunk, seh—of Mississippi City, Mississippi."

And with the lofty air of a Tunk of Mississippi City, the colonel bowed from the gallery of his ancestral home.

"Oh—Tunk!"

Mr. Tuttle bowed also, but to Miss

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Mattie Millard, vice-president of the Anti-Bootleggers' League of Mississippi City, Mississippi, Lafe Tuttle whispered:

"Tink—Tank—Tunk—play it on your banjo. Oh, yes, Colonel Tunk! Mighty good of you to give us a hundred for the new church. Mighty generous—and I hear you offer to buy the old lot and building from Miss Sweet, now that it reverts to her by the terms of the original deed. Your ancestors helped to dedicate it, didn't they, Colonel—Tank?"

"Tunk, seh!"

Colonel Tunk waved his hand grandly toward the tumbledown, abandoned First Baptist church next door.

"Sentiment, seh. And Miss Rosemary Sweet—one of our old families, seh."

"Dear old colonel!" whispered Mattie Millard behind the windshield of Rev. Mr. Tuttle's red and yellow speed demon. "It's because of the mint-bed. But, gee—giving us a hundred! The Baptists'll have a gym with a swimmin' tank—and a recreation hall—with dumb-bells and things. What you think of us, colonel?"

"Seh—Ma'am? I fear the old-time religion is good enough fo' me."

"The floor of the recreation hall will be waxed, and——"

"Hush," said young Mr. Tuttle earnestly. "I never said the floor would be waxed. Still it might help the back-sliders slide. But, colonel—a hundred dollars donation! Fine—but why don't we ever see you in church?"

"He's an Episcopalian, I—think," mused Miss Millard. "But then, one never remembers what a Tunk is, except he's a Tunk."

"Oh, I heard of 'em. Wonderful old family! Then there are the Brandagees, and Gilfishes and Sweets. Oh, yes. Why it was in 1831 that General Ashmun Sweet and Senator Vance Tunk donated the lot and meetin'-house, and laid the cornerstone of the old church we're giving up with such regret. Why Deacon Gilfish showed me a copy of an old yellowed paper—the Mississippi City *Bugle* of some ninety-two years ago, with an account of the cornerstone laying and Tunks and Sweets and——"

Colonel Tunk had started slightly. There might even have been a tremor in the gray eye which he fixed searchingly on young Rev. Mr. Tuttle.

"Seh? Mr. Gilfish, seh?"

"Yes. He first told me about you wishing to help the fortunes of poor old Miss Rosemary Sweet by buying the abandoned church lot. He was—well—thrilled with it. I remember he stopped—or rather I stopped him—back of the old churchyard. He'd been on a 'possum hunt all night and he had his two houn' dogs and a jug——"

"'Possum hunt, with a jug," mused Colonel Tunk. "Well, of course, juggin' 'possums—anything is possible with a Gilfish. May I ask which way Mr. Gilfish was headed fo' with two houn' dogs and a jug?"

"Crossin' the old buryin'-ground past the mint spring. Early, too. I was out taking my half-mile before breakfast."

Right then Mr. Tuttle sniffed the air. Fine air. A sweet, Spring morning.

No time of year to jug 'possums. But that spicy garden behind the abandoned First Baptist meetin'-house, the lichen-grown tombstones of Tunks and Brandagees leaning all awry in this creeping green. Menacing, meaningful, unconstitutionally subversive, the original mint-bed of the first families of Mississippi City, Mississippi, had crept for a century from the Tunk plantation lot across the Baptists' enclosure; now a vain thing, an economic waste never contemplated by the founders, flinging its snare of perfume not only to the true believers, but also those to whom mint meant no more than Spring lamb dressing.

Rev. Lafe B. Tuttle sniffed again.

"Dawg-gone!" he murmured absently and sat back behind his wheel.

Colonel Tunk also sat back on his cane-bottom chair with the assured air of one who owned the morning and the sweetness thereof. Not even this new missionary-preacher come to town and starting folks to build a new church with a swimmin'-hole and dumb-bells in the basement, skurrying around on his pastoral duties in a red-and-yellow roadster could disquiet the ten o'clock calm of a Tunk on the front gallery of the Tunk plantation-house, with the world in review above the rusty iron fence embowered in honeysuckle and aglint with humming-birds.

What Lafe Tuttle did, thought, said was of no moment to a Tunk. But Miss Mattie Millard; well, had not, on this same gallery, Millards of three generations stirred juleps

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with two-bottle Tunks, outbrandied the Brandagees, sweetened toddies with Sweets —and now, here she was, vice-president of the Anti-Bootleggers' League of Mississippi City, Mississippi, and snugged up beside this missionary fellow in an aroma of gasoline.

"Dawg-gone!" repeated Lafe Tuttle thoughtfully. "We are all creatures of sentiment. The old settlers' mint-bed—well, of course, I understand. Mint and sentimint——"

"That's awful," Mattie murmured. "Unless you've lived here all your life, and know the ins and outs of the old families, you won't understand. I imagine, on Resurrection Day, there won't needs be any angel with a flaming sword to mark off the sheep from the goats as far as Mississippi City is concerned. All the First Families will be flocking off trying to pass themselves into Heaven as Spring lamb with mint-sauce dressin'. It's been a church scandal, that mint-bed. Many a time I've seen old Dr. Bascom trying to preach a sermon on the evils of rum, and a whiff of that mint came in the meetin'-house windows. Every one of the old families had their necks turned to smell of it. It wasn't roast lamb on their minds either——"

"Well," said Rev. Mr. Tuttle thoughtfully, "I'm glad that I'm to start my labors in the new East Side church. I expect I jar these old timers."

Not a Tunk. Not even that red-and-yellow speedster in which Rev. Tuttle went about his pastoral duties. A racing man in New Orleans to whose last hours Mr. Tuttle had ministered had left him that car, and Mr. Tuttle hadn't reflected on how it might jar his flock. Still, there was Elijah —who knew with what iridescent glory his chariot was painted for the first long-distance ascent?

Young Mr. Tuttle would have jerked the world from sin with syncopation if that had sufficed. He regarded Colonel Tunk with sympathy.

"Well, that hundred is fine. I thank you, colonel! Coming from you it'll be remembered. It surprized the trustees."

"A Tunk, seh, needs no Gehenneh, after the Amendment. As my brother, who represents this commonwealth in the councils of our glorious but arid republic would say, seh——"

"Step on it," murmured Mattie Millard. "I mean the gas, Mr. Tuttle."

They departed in a lurid *whizzbang* down toward the railway station to get a donation from the agent. Colonel T. Sambola Tunk straightened his black string tie and resumed his survey of Magnolia Street. Let swimmin' Baptists swim and 60 h. p. motors roar. So, when Mr. Gilfish came up the gallery from the cotton warehouse, while waiting for business to open, Colonel Tunk looked on him with no more interest than any gentleman will direct against his neighbor's hip pocket.

"Mornin', kunnel."

"Mornin', seh."

"Seen that new, live-wire young preacher here. Reckon he stuck you like the rest of 'em. Don't reckon he said anything about what Miss Rosemary Sweet'd do with the old meetin'-house now that it comes back to her by the terms of the first deed?"

Colonel Tunk eyed his fellow-pilgrim. Then the old tumbledown church. Even the wooden belfry leaned tipsily as if the First Family founders must have had theirs that June day in 1831.

"Well, say!" mused Mr. Gilfish. "So the Sweet estate gets the old church lot back again! I just been lookin' up the records in the county court-house. As real estate, it ain't much—but——"

Mr. Gilfish looked at Colonel Tunk.

"But—there's that corner-stone. Almost worth gettin' married for! Yes, sir, kunnel, I'd marry a flock o' Baptists to git one snoop under that old stone. If I was an old party like some I know, oh well——"

Here Mr. Gilfish leaned to nudge Colonel Tunk in the ribs.

"The waters o' life, hey? As your old hootch-hittin' ancestor said, when he laid the First Baptist corner-stone? Well, I reckon him and General Ashmun Sweet, they dedicated this church on sorghum, didn't they now?"

Colonel Tunk watched Mr. Gilfish cryptically. Still, his eye betrayed him. And no 'possum dog ever clung to a trail more avidly than Mr. Gilfish now followed the colonel's weakening.

"Aged in wood! Ninety-three years in an old oak hand-hewed demijohn—they made 'em right in them days! Aw—kunnel! I ain't no fool—I can read between the lines! I read them old dedication

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speeches that they made. 'A fount from which future generations could draw inspiration,' hey? Well, what was an old-time Tunk talkin' about, anyhow?"

Still, that majestic air with which a Tunk listens to a Gilfish. But Mr. Gilfish drew an ancient, yellowed copy of an ante-bellum newspaper from his pocket and spread it before Colonel Tunk's eye.

"No wonder you was so anxious for the Baptists to move and build a new church," gloated Mr. Gilfish. "You give a hundred dollars to 'em, and begin shinin' up to Miss Rosemary Sweet. What you want is to dig into that foundation-stone afore some rum-hound comes snoopin' along. Judge Brandagee, he's been studyin' them old records, too. And you better watch out!"

Colonel Tunk twisted his starboard mustache nervously. As the author of a two-volume history of the pioneers of Mississippi City, Mississippi, it was vain to plead ignorance. They were giants in those days. They didn't dedicate anything on sorghum.

"Seh?" he began suavely. "What am I to infer?"

"Hootch," whispered Mr. Gilfish craftily. "Aw, well—here we are, two weary pilgrims trottin' the hot sands. How about fifty-fifty on what them old-timers hid up in the Baptist corner-stone?"

"Seh," returned Colonel Tunk deliberately. "Admittin' that your theory is true—I will give you one drink and one hundred dollars——"

"One dollar—and one hundred drinks," retorted Mr. Gilfish.

"Good day, seh!" Colonel Tunk arose. "You come in the spirit of the Vandals sackin' Rome. Good day, seh!"

No man can trust no man. Even the 'possum dog that followed Mr. Gilfish had his doubts. He had watched that jug many nights and no 'possum had ever come out of it. Not even a chipmunk.

"Well, all right," grunted Mr. Gilfish. "You come talk business with me, kunnel, before you git too sentimental over that Baptist corner-stone. I know what them old-timers was alludin' to. Up in the courthouse is a copy of the Mississippi City *Bugle* of ninety-three years ago with an account of that dedication. There was a big old hand-hewn oak demijohn and a bunch of documents and relics—but you and Judge Brandagee and these here old boys that begun to show such an interest in religion; well, there's some talk beginnin' to get around. And if this new bearcat preacher hears it——"

"I said, good day, seh!"

Colonel Tunk turned into his house. He mopped his head feverishly.

"Hi-jacker! No time to lose. This 'possum jugger will be droppin' his hints to Preacher Tuttle next. The time calls fo' true men and action."

TEN minutes later Colonel T. Sambola Tunk was striding up the grass-grown flagstones to the ancient plantation-house of the Sweets just across the acre-wide churchyard among whose oaks the little gray pioneer church was tumbling into decay.

The last persimmon on the Sweet family-tree sat on her front gallery. Colonel Tunk had been calling on Miss Rosemary Sweet since the first Bryan campaign, and folks had long since ceased to expect or hope anything from it. Especially since Miss Sweet had become prominent in the Anti-Bootleggers' League two decades ago. That ended it for Colonel Tunk. No bone-dry romance for him. And yet he dropped in, now and then, to preserve the formalities, because Tunks and Sweets had called on each other since the Missouri Compromise. They had mingled juleps from the churchyard mint-bed; and mingled their bones beneath it when the time came.

Miss Sweet was no Southern rose. She turned a hard little blue eye, and she always sniffed when Colonel Tunk sat down as if she was trying to decide whether it was cinnamon or cloves. She always made Colonel Tunk reflect that the Constitution follows the jag, and he tried to conduct his conversation outside the three-yard limit.

He never got any further than to remark how well she was looking; and Miss Sweet, after listening primly to this start, allowed him to revert to the Carpetbaggers and Reconstruction from which he would slip down the ages to the present wreck and ruin of the world. Chaos for the colonel started with the Amendment, and all he could do now was to exalt his two-bottle ancestors and apotheosize the churchyard mint-bed. No family in Mississippi City whose forebears had not chinned a frosty julep from the old First Baptist mint-bed could be of any importance.

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So this morning he had got down as far as the Mexican War when across the square by the depot scooted that red-and-yellow roadster of the Rev. Lafayette B. Tuttle with Miss Mattie Millard in it.

They hauled up before the Gilfish cotton warehouse; and there was a distant flash of white paper as the proprietor came out and stood talking with Mr. Tuttle.

"I'm willing to say," broke in Miss Rosemary, "that there goes another donation to the new Baptist church. And I understand that you gave a hundred dollars, colonel?"

"Yes, seh—ma'am—not that I understand what a Baptist wants with a swimmin'-tank and dumb-bells in the basement when he is called to labor in our fruitful but dusty vineyard. But, sentiment, Miss Rosemary— A Tunk aided to dedicate the First church nearly a century ago, and a Tunk today waves them farewell off the old meetin'-house lot. Sentiment, ma'am—as I understand the old mint-bed reverts to you. Of course you will cherish it for old associations, ma'am——"

"I should say not!" reported Miss Sweet. "A mint-bed that first makes a scandal by growin' all over the buryin'-ground and then invades the church lot as well. I shall sell it. I've had two good offers for the lot after it reverts to me."

Colonel Tunk stiffened alertly.

"Two, Miss Rosemary?"

"Judge Brandagee wanted to buy the lot, and then, not half an hour ago, in comes Mr. Gilfish. And he said — tee-hee—" here Miss Sweet tittered coyly behind the baby cap she was knitting for the Aid Society—"in fact, they both said—tee-hee——"

"Upstart!" gasped Colonel Tunk. "A proposal? Miss Rosemary, surely, seh—ma'am — you couldn't think, considering how the mint-bed is a bond and sentiment between Tunks and Sweets——"

"A bond!" whispered Miss Sweet as she watched Colonel Tunk's white mustachios work agitatedly.

Colonel Tunk arose and strode the gallery on which the Tunks and Sweets had stirred toddies before the Baptists invented swimmin'.

"Seh—ma'am! You and I — last survivors of an era of fast hosses, beautiful wimmen, strong men and likker fitten fo' 'em! An age, ma'am, when it came by the bar'l on Kaintucky packets instead of bein' aged in the back seat of some hillbilly gas-wagon behind the Gilfish cotton warehouse overnight! A noble, illustrious time, ma'am, when no gentleman hunted 'possums with a jug——"

"I'm a church member in good standin'," sighed Miss Sweet, "but you're so eloquent —I can't help thinkin' of mince pies——"

Colonel Tunk bent toward her eagerly.

"Ah, you said it! Mince pie? Who, in this degenerate age, can realize what a mince pie might be? Think, Miss Rosemary—come next Thanksgivin', of a mince pie that would bring your ancestors and mine out o' the grave like it was Resurrection Day? Spirits raised from the vasty deep and shakin' a bone together over a last Judgment mint-julep? Called back, Miss Rosemary, by mincemeat that the angels would greet with hallelujahs at the pearly gates, but which couldn't get by the customs of this mighty but misguided republic? Think, seh—ma'am—words fail me, but would you—could you?"

"Oh, colonel!"

Miss Sweet fell over against his alpaca coat.

"You mean——"

"I — I mean — well, the First Baptist church lot—I mean——"

"I'll marry you, colonel! You dear man —after all these years——"

"Seh—ma'am," gasped Colonel Tunk.

And on the back of Miss Sweet's clammy hand he imprinted a faint fragrance of cinnamon and popskull hootch.

"Wait a minute. I was merely thinkin' —aged in oak, ninety-three years——"

"Why, colonel, you're only sixty-six! You dear old thing——"

"But—wa-it a minute——"

Then around the honeysuckle hedge came that 'possum-juggin' Gilfish. He took one long, searching look at Miss Sweet's front gallery and departed. Colonel Tunk hastily seized his hat.

"A moment, Miss—Rosemary. An engagement—seh, ma'am——"

And hastily Colonel Tunk vanished to Magnolia Street. He was passing the post-office when Judge Brandagee and Mr. Gilfish looked searchingly at him. They were whispering; they shook their heads.

Colonel Tunk fled upstairs to his law office. He dismissed Hogjaw, his office and house retainer, and man of all work, and

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paced the floor agitatedly. He could look right across at Judge Brandagee and Mr. Gilfish conferring; and a block away was the ramshackle belfry of the tumbledown meetin'-house. Back of it the tomb of his ancestors. Engulfed and lost in that unconstitutional mint-bed. Dust unto dust, maybe, but the Scriptures never said bone-dry.

"Me — marry a member of the Anti-Bootleggers League?" whispered Colonel Tunk. "What I meant was mince pie. Su'tinly she ought to realize I meant pie. A pie, seh, such as would have held up our Pilgrim Fathers twelve miles off-shore! But ——, before that bloodsucker, Gilfish, gets the church lot I'll marry fo' it. The time calls fo' true men and bold. This very night, seh—no man can trust no man! Folks around this town are takin' too much interest in the county archives among which is the speech that Senator Vance Tunk alluded to the waters o' life sealed in the stone as a symbol fo' future ages. Sutinly a Tunk never contemplated sorghum!"

Back at his ancestral home that afternoon Colonel Tunk called in his trusty henchman. Hogjaw scratched his head over certain instructions.

"De big wreckin'-bar, and de little crowbar. A couple o' pries an' a block an' tickle —well, kunnel, ain' you fo'got some'pin'?"

"What, boy?"

"Well, gen'lemun roamin' eroun' nights sometimes has a jug. Mr. Gilfish, I see him out in yo' back fiel' wif a jug——"

"Seh, this is no 'possum hunt. We are to tap a certain rock, and what Moses brought forth for the Israelites will be no mo' than a damp spot compared to this undertakin'. Meet me at the side gate to the old buryin'-ground with the utensils I told you of. And secrecy, boy—absolute secrecy."

Hogjaw ambled away wisely. When a gen'lemun talked like that he determined to bring two jugs. Until dark he saw Colonel Tunk on his gallery keeping an eye on the old churchyard. Then there came unwonted lights on Miss Sweet's porch and in the sitting-room. Colonel Tunk wondered? Well, maybe this was prayer-meetin' night? Anyhow, if so he'd know where that bearcat of a preacher was safely planted. No man can trust no man.

By nine o'clock folks had come and gone to Miss Sweet's, and there were lights all over the big house. Out in the field-hands' quarters a black boy let a joyous whoop. Top buggies of the old families, coupés of the middle-age, and speedsters of the flapper-age, ambled and honked into the drive and added welcomed guests.

When Colonel Tunk met his trusty retainer at the back of the churchyard, the old Sweet house was all het up with merry-makers. The two conspirators stole through the buryin'-ground and to the corner of the ancient belfry under the big oaks. Colonel Tunk reached a hand to the crumbling bricks and plaster.

"The vandals, boy, are knockin' at the gates. No time to lose. You get a pry under the underpinnin', and then knock away the bricks. Quiet with the tools. Now, get to work. Loosen that top slab, seh."

Hogjaw whispered his doubts. Many a night he had doubled on his tracks to fetch hillbilly blockade stuff around to the Tunk kitchen, but blackjacking the First Baptist church next door was mysterious. He muffled his wrecking-bar in a gunny-bag and heaved.

Once a clapboard rattled down from the creaky belfry, and they retreated to the shelter of the wood lot. Then out again.

"Whut-all dem folkses whizzin' aroun', kunnel?" muttered the worker. "Ef I gits kookluxed, who's gwine to run yo' little jigger o' popskull fo' yo', kunnel? That new preacher's done come, fo' I heard him honkin' his hawn. We got to look out, kunnel——"

"Pry away that slab, boy. I see Judge Brandagee and Mr. Gilfish on Miss Sweet's gallery. That's good—tomorrow let the heathen rage."

Hogjaw went back with caution. A lot of bricks fell away from under the beams, and he ducked aside with a wild look across the yard. Nothing but the righteous and unterrified air of Colonel T. Sambola Tunk on guard at the corner of the building held Hogjaw to the job. Too much public notice is bad even for 'possum-jugging.

Hogjaw stopped again agitatedly when he had swung the close-fitting top slab from its decayed mortar, and Colonel Tunk stuck his nose reverently to the crack. Off at the Sweet house Miss Rosemary's phonograph was squalling something. At first Colonel Tunk thought it was a medley from *Filet Mignon*, and then Little Brown Jug; and then it howled into Mendelssohn's infamous march which Colonel Tunk had

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resolved years ago he would never hear anywhere else except on a disk record, and he trusted that would be cracked.

"Somebody," breathed Hogjaw, "am goin' to be ma'ied!"

"Loosen that slab——"

"Shivaree!" gasped Hogjaw: "Dey's started paradin' fum ole Mis' Sweet's oveh to yo' house! Kunnel, doan' tell me!"

A shiver went down Colonel Tunk's spine. No, sir, not if he could help it. Not if— He turned about and jabbed a long finger toward his retainer.

"Boy, pull away on that block!"

Twenty-seven Indians scalping an early settler couldn't have made more noise than the Baptist young folks out in the street now.

But Hogjaw had torn away the last obstruction to the aperture in the big square stone in which the founders of Mississippi City had deposited the documents and relics of their day for a generation yet unborn. Colonel Tunk was greeted by an odor of old wood and mustiness. He knocked off the dust of decades as he felt over the round rough staves of an old hand-hewn demijohn. And as county historian he paid no more attention to the other relics than if they had been copies of the Congressional debate on the Volstead Act. Up to the starlight he heaved the hickory-banded demijohn, with Hogjaw clutching the other side. Together they set it down on the brick dust and stared. Colonel Tunk seemed murmuring a prayer. Then he listened to that uproar invading his ancestral front gallery.

"Come, boy. Tunks of a hundred years look down upon us——"

He had the waters of life by one lug lugging them down the trail of crushed mint toward the fence. Speed—even Hogjaw had difficulty in keeping up and seizing the other side of the big demijohn. Colonel Tunk muttered with choked reverence. His disciple suddenly stopped.

"Cain't go home! Dem Baptists sho engulfed you' place lak you was summoned to de moaneh's bench! Dat new preacher he's leadin' 'em, an' Miss Mattie—dey's callin' you out, kunnel."

"The bottoms, seh! Back in the woods until——"

They staggered toward the buryin'-ground half-dragging the ninety-three year-old aged-in-wood. Jubilant young Baptists were jumping the Sweet fence and cross-cutting toward the Tunk homestead. Right around the corner of the wrecked belfry; and from the first young hootch-hound went up a yell of surprize.

"Seh—ma'am," gasped Colonel Tunk. "Lead on anywhere to safety."

"Kunnel, it wouldn't do no way fo' you to be found bootleggin' an ol' jug o' popskull——"

"Popskull?"

Colonel Tunk seethed about on his retainer.

"Boy, shoulder that demijohn! On with it! Popskull—pop—pop——"

Two yards to gain to the shadow of the yellowed Tunk tomb—and they made it. Hogjaw swung down his burden.

"Oh, lawdy! Dem young limbs o' evil comin' lak terriers, kunnel! Whut'll we do now?"

"Popskull," murmured Colonel T. Sambola Tunk, and took off his panama in apology before the tomb of his ancestors. Behind this slab, Senator Vance Tunk, who dedicated the Baptist cornerstone in 1831; General Woodfin Tunk, who lost a leg but not his thirst at Chapultepec in 1847; Major Garford Tunk, who died of corn likker just before Pickett's charge at Gettysburg—Two-bottle, four-bottle Tunks half-shot on the fields of honor. Reverently Colonel Tunk wiped his perspiring brow. Pop-skull, eh?

"All dem folkses jubilatin' on you' front gallery," whispered Hogjaw. "'Pears lak somebody got religion or got ma'ied."

Plain enough who was meant! Colonel Tunk buttoned his coat and pointed formidably toward the back-wood lot.

"Boy, on your way——"

Hogjaw heaved up his burden and then set it down with a gasp.

Around the corner of the Tunk tomb came a shade which now resolved itself into Mr. Gilfish, the 'possum-jugger. He stopped abruptly, and yet like a man hardly surprized.

"Well, I'm jiggered! Good thing I took a sneak off around here by myself! Snooped one on me, hey, kunnel? Well, you better go home and say howdy to the folks. They all come over to congratulate you on your engagement."

"Seh? Engagement?"

"Miss Sweet calls 'em all up and announces it. Why they all adjourns prayer-meetin' to come over! Everybody set up and took notice——"

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"Infamous, seh! I never said—it was a mere—pleasantry——"

"Well, it just stumped me. But then I had a hunch, kunnel——"

Mr. Gilfish moved over and put a hand on the hewn oak staves with the bands of ancient dried hickory withes.

"Offer me a hundred dollars and one drink, did you? Well, I'm here, kunnel. Fifty-fifty——"

"Mr. Gilfish, seh?" Colonel Tunk raised a hand solemnly.

"Whack up or I raise a holler! That live-wire preacher and Mattie Millard, and the whole durn bunch'll be down here if I raise one yawp. Where'll you be? Skunked by Swanny!"

There was a fiendish chortle in Mr. Gilfish's throat as he kicked a two-gallon jug out of the weeds. Undoubtedly he had been doing his own plotting tonight. Well, no man can trust no man.

COLONEL TUNK sat down on the cold stone coping along the rear of his family's last resting-place. He could hear the gurgle of the bold spring down the branch below them, and the smell of crushed mint was in his nostrils. Hogjaw stole dubiously out to the shadows of the oaks as the yells of the Baptist young people grew cheerier in the front yard.

This 'possum-juggin' hi-jacker was scraping the top of the ancestral demijohn with his knife. He sniffed and motioned Colonel Tunk nearer.

"Oh, come on, kunnel! We'll split the stuff, and I'll be best man at your weddin'. You cain't say I done you wrong. Minute I heard you asked Miss Sweet to marry you I knew I had to go to diggin'. I ain't sore because you beat me to it. All's fair in love an' likker."

"Proceed, seh," said Colonel Tunk sepulchrally. "Fate has no mo' disasters fo' a true man. Your jug, seh—and quick!"

Mr. Gilfish was picking into the swath of hard wax and sacking that enclosed the demijohn's neck. Colonel Tunk bent near him. Crouched in the mint-bed behind the vault, they scraped and dug and twisted. Enmity and intrigue were forgotten, even the whoops of the vandals on the Tunk gallery hardly reached their ears, when Mr. Gilfish reached the huge cork and jabbed his jackknife into it.

"Seh," prayed Colonel Tunk. "Careful, Mr. Gilfish——"

"Whoopee!" grinned Mr. Gilfish. "Who said sorghum?"

"Desecration! Seh, can you conceive of ninety-three year old Bourbon sealed in hand-hewed oak, laid away by reverent hands——"

"Gimme my jug, we got to split and git out o' here. Wait—here's a paper wrapped inside the bung-hole with writin' on it."

"A message from the illustrious departed, seh!"

Colonel Tunk took the wrinkled roll of brown parchment with a hand that trembled slightly. He struck a match and tried to read faint markings on the inner side. At least, at the end, he made out the bold signature of his grandfather, Senator Vance Tunk of Mississippi City, Miss.

"Seh, wait. A voice from the other world, safe outside the twelve-mile limit, speaks to us. Hold your hand, seh——"

Mr. Gilfish held his hand, but his nose was at the bung-hole.

"Dawg-gone! Smells like old wood and musty cloth. Gimme that funnel and we pour out a jigger apiece. Listen to the Baptists yell, will you?"

Mr. Gilfish gurgled three fingers out to a glass pony he produced from his pocket.

"Well, here's to 'em! Mud in your eye, kunnel!"

He gulped it down. Then there was silence. Colonel Tunk took the glass. He poured his jigger and held it to the starlight. The silence from Mr. Gilfish's side of the demijohn was profound. Awed, overcome, dumb, dazed by likker that was fitten only for a Tunk.

Colonel Tunk had downed his as Mr. Gilfish arose unsteadily.

"Huh!" he sneered: "You hi-jacked that, somehow!"

"You done me a dastardly, infamous, low-lifed trick, seh!"

"Water," moaned Mr. Gilfish. "If it ain't full o' dead wiggletails then I'm clean fitified in the head!"

"Water—" Colonel Tunk got to his feet—"Water, seh, tastin' worse than even water could taste. Seh, you tampered with that corner-stone. You have put on me, seh, an insult than which——"

"I swallered it," whispered Mr. Gilfish feebly. "Down in my insides. Bilge water—let me get home before I'm sick. Listen

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to 'em yell up at your place. Ancestors, hey? And they knew booze——"

Colonel Tunk followed him weakly down past the mint-spring and through the back fence and across the mule lot to the rear of the Tunk cotton-shed.

"Git away," gasped Mr. Gilfish. "Old family ——! What I want is to get sea-sick! Mustard an' water—quick——"

Colonel Tunk was lighting the lantern under the shed beam.

"Wait, seh."

He was trying to make out the yellowed inscription which his revered ancestor left with the cornerstone relics for a generation to come. Colonel Tunk read feebly and faltered.

He muttered to himself; his voice drooled off unmeaningly, as Mr. Gilfish held the lantern, and with one hand on his stomach. Colonel Tunk whispered on, and then he crushed the ancient missive in a firm hand.

"What's the matter?" grunted Mr. Gilfish. "Go on——"

"Seh, the honor of the family forbids me to reveal what is written there. I can only account fo' it by sayin' that there must have been a streak of lunacy in our family hitherto unknown. Senator Tunk, seh, must have been totterin' to imbecility in his last years. He recommends us, seh—whoever should uncover the dedication stone of the Baptist Church in future ages, to the waters of life a sample of which he bottled out of the meetin'-house spring as a symbol of his regeneration. Turned tee-totaler, seh, the day he laid that corner-stone! Spring water, seh—aged ninety-three years in oak!"

"Gimme my jug," whispered Mr. Gilfish. "No man can trust no man!"

Colonel Tunk sat on a log in his mule lot until the last celebrant at his ancestral home had tired out and departed.

There's no saying how long Colonel Tunk sat there. Mr. Gilfish limped around a turn in the hall of the Oddfellows' Building the next morning from Doc Slocum's and he heard Hogjaw in Colonel Tunk's law office dusting around as usual. Then the telephone rang.

Deacon Gilfish listened with one hand on his stomach, and the other in his pocket on some peppermint tonic. Hogjaw was answering the phone with a mighty cautious interest.

"Yas-sum. Yas-sum, Miss Sweet. Well, it do beat all whut you say 'at de ole Fust Baptist belfry done fell down las' night. I reckon all de ole fust families dey mighty sad erbout it. An' Kunnel Tunk? Well, all I can say is he neve' showed up no mo' even fo' his breakfus'. Dey's a cyahd on his do' sayin' he's done gone to Bermooda."

Plants on LIFE

by Bill Adams

Soilers of Truth

I'VE no notion why we're here, no notion of any god, of any truth, though truth lies somewhere hidden amidst us, I am sure. But came an old-time warrior in truth's gay behalf to earth again today! What then? Christ, sitting on the temple steps with head bent down, the bitterness of this thing they say His Father made overpowering Him!

I don't know what to think of it. It seems—too great a fight; too fearful a thing to tell folks to cheer up and carry on and that some day all will be well. Yet, there is no other way. Mankind swamped in the sloughs of bigotry and lying, downweighted by the clink of coins they gather in places that should be holy ground where never thought of pelf might enter—mankind looks, looking blindly, helpless, afraid or greatly daring in despair, to a truth whose face seems turned away from it.

They have lied to us, and stolen the beauty that might have been so beautiful. The world, despite its pealing temple bells, and satisfied prelates, is today as far from Christ's fearless honor as was the world when you and I, as great bare-breasted brutes, swung freely through the tree-tops, ere we had come to stand erect. I am not afraid of God. No man who doubts of God needs fear Him, I am sure.

But—the soilers of the whiteness of the truth, who soil it with their blasphemies and bleak hypocrisies—preserve us from them.

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THE CAT'S PAW

By J. D. Newsom

Author of "Jackaroo," "The Deserters," etc.

SHORTLY after one o'clock in the morning Flemming awoke, dry-mouthed, to the sudden realization that something, somewhere close at hand, was wrong. He sat propping himself up with the palms of his hands resting slightly behind him, craning his head forward, trying to pierce the silence and the darkness of the room.

The heavy stillness of the night was unbroken. Through the open window he could see above the black mass of the trees a velvety patch of sky where three stars hung glinting metallically. A faint warm breeze stirred the white curtains and made them ripple in sudden vertical undulations.

With one leg dangling out of bed Flemming waited. He moved restlessly, annoyed at the nameless dread that had jerked him back to consciousness and, for a second, sent a chill of terror tingling down his spine.

"Nerves," he whispered to himself. "All nerves. Must have been dreaming."

Perhaps a board had creaked, or a lizard raced noisily through the dry thatch overhead. Perhaps one of the divers, unable to sleep, was prowling about outside, or Nidjo, the Javanese house-boy, had had one of his nightmares. When Nidjo had a nightmare he cried like a gull.

"I wonder," murmured Flemming. "I wonder——"

One hushed minute crept by, soundless but for the faint snapping of the breeze-blown curtains. That and the hammer-strokes of his heart—nothing else. Flemming grinned in the darkness, half-ashamed of the ungovernable horror of the unknown that had lashed him back into wakefulness.

He was growing jumpy these days. And, when all was said and done, small wonder. He was within an ace of cleaning up a quarter of a million dollars and going home. All that potential wealth lay within reach of his hand. A quarter of a million dollars' worth of pearls gleaned week by week, year by year, off the floor of the lagoon whose waters lapped the sand not a stone's throw from the house.

When he reached home some people might think he had picked up easy money. Well, let 'em think what they liked.

He grunted, wondering how many of his former acquaintances would have stood the strain and the loneliness of eleven years' exile on a speck of an island, cut off by three hundred miles of water from his nearest white neighbor. And the trouble he'd had picking good divers; the thieves who had tried to rob him; the poachers who had swept down upon Kariyara and tried to frighten him off; the time he'd been down with dysentery and had had to leave the running of the place to Nidjo, and the time the hurricane had come up without warning, capsized the float on which he had been standing and drowned three of his best divers!

Nidjo had saved him—paddled out in a crazy little canoe across the wind-lashed

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water and picked him out by the scruff of his neck. Strong as an ox, that little fellow was, and a good man for all his yellow skin and that absurd smile of his that made a rectangular frame for a mouthful of bad teeth. But not even Nidjo knew the real extent of the treasure that had been brought up from beneath the lagoon's green waters.

A quarter of a million dollars in eleven years! Not so bad. But he'd never let on. Down at Vila, where he bought his supplies, the traders laughed at him. They called Kariyara a white elephant, said he was wasting his time, said he was frittering away the best years of his life trying to get rich quick. Well, he didn't mind wasting his time that way. He was still young—thirty-five—and when he reached home he'd be ready to begin living. Quite a number of interesting things could be done with two hundred and fifty thousand dollars. Quite a goodly number.

Let them laugh! And he'd been wise enough to keep his mouth shut. There were no inquests held for people who died on islands like Kariyara, and if anybody had got wind of his find they would have been after him. Of course, some folks were suspicious: Thieving divers he'd sent away knew roughly what the place was worth. They spread the news. Occasionally their yarns were believed. He'd had to fight once or twice, but three hundred miles of open sea was the best kind of protection. And in a fortnight or so he'd be on his way home!

He pushed his revolver beneath the pillow, yawned, and let himself sink down on the bed again. *That* scare was over! Sleepily he pulled the sheet up about his neck, but for some unaccountable reason he did not close his eyes. Couldn't close them. As soon as he lay down that weird feeling of unrest came back to roost on his chest. He stared at the ceiling and followed the vague outline of the cross-beams to the point where they vanished into the wall. Down the wall his gaze traveled picking out familiar objects in the thick darkness—the mirror, a picture frame, the lintel above the door.

And the door—queer how his mouth went dry again—stood ajar. He was sure of it, positive, yet he had closed it on going to bed. It wasn't really open, he assured himself—just an optical illusion, a trick of the night, a shadow. Confound this jumpiness!

He could not get rid of the feeling that he was being watched, could almost hear some one breathing close behind him, but whenever he thought he had located some suspicious sound the sudden snap of the curtains recurred and destroyed it.

And—was the door really closed? It couldn't be: That oblong, very black patch was neither wall nor door panel. He must be looking straight through into the living-room. —— the uncertainty!

"I'm going to make sure one way or the other," he muttered, half-angrily. "I can't stand this any more."

Again he sat up and swung his legs from under the covers. He reached for his revolver——

Round and hard, the muzzle of a gun was jammed against his side and a voice came out of the darkness behind him—

"Put 'em up, Flemming, and keep still."

Tongue-tied, he obeyed almost with a sigh of relief. The intolerable uncertainty was over. In a minute he would know who had crept into his house and then, perhaps, if his aggressor made one false move he could gain the upper hand.

No, he wasn't afraid. Not a bit. Brain was working smoothly, coolly now. The man, whoever he was, stood on the far side of the bed, one knee depressing the mattress.

"He's leaning forward," thought Flemming. "Nearly overbalanced or he couldn't keep his gun against my back. He'll have to move some time or other."

Tight fix, all right, but he'd been in worse corners. That time, for instance, when Mapuna had him up against the wall with a machete at his throat. Nidjo had turned up not a minute too late.

He wondered what had happened to the Javanese——

How long was this fellow going to stand there tickling his ribs with a gun-muzzle?

"Well," he said aloud, "what do you want?"

The man behind him chuckled—

"What d'you think we want?"

Then raising his voice he called out—

"Hi, there, Woody, I got him!"

And somebody answered from the gloom of the living-room:

"A'right, Scanlon, I won't be a minute. I'll make a light if I can find this here —— lamp."

Flemming heard heavy footsteps and a curse as the last speaker collided against some piece of furniture.

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The man at his back laughed.

"Don't get rattled, Woody. Take your time. 'E's as quiet as a mouse. Take your time. Don't want to lose no toe-nails what might be used as evidence."

A match flared up, spluttering in the darkness. For a second Flemming caught sight of a bulky form, and the back of a round head on a thick neck, and big ears that showed pink in the flash. Then the light went out.

"I sees it," went on the preoccupied voice. "It's one of these here hanging lamps. You hold him a piece longer, Scanlon."

"Now, don't you move," said the latter, addressing Flemming. "I'm coming around besides you. And I got you covered, remember. I can see fine. Keep 'em well up."

He backed away, moving quickly around the foot of the bed. In that second's respite, letting himself fall sidewise so that his hand closed on the stock of his revolver, Flemming rolled over onto the floor.

The night awoke to the crash of the guns, red tongues of flame seared the darkness. And there followed a reverberating silence so intense that Flemming, crouching low, heard the pound of his racing heart and for a space feared that it might give him away.

The other man—Woody—had stopped dead. The lull persisted. And again Flemming became aware of the curtains by the window fluttering a little. Irritated by the sound they made he looked up. Against the right hand curtain he thought he saw the vague outline of a shoulder and an arm.

The —— thing moved about so much! Couldn't be sure. If only it would stay still for one fifth of a second!

Straining his eyes he peered at the shadow, resting his revolver on the bed before him. The shadow moved, blotted out the gray of the curtain; a head appeared, blurred against the sky. It moved again. The muzzle of a gun gleamed in the faint starlight.

Flemming felt the corners of his mouth twitch upward and his eyebrows drew up toward his temples. His teeth ached as he ground them and his tongue was pressed against his palate. His forehead was cold with sweat.

Pearls? In some remote corner of his brain there was, perhaps, a memory of them, but as he watched the black form take shape against the somber sky, his one thought was to shoot and shoot to kill.

His trigger-finger grew taut. Almost before he was aware of it the shot crashed out, and his whole frame shook as he snarled. The man by the window collapsed, screaming:

"Get him, Woody. For ——'s sake, get him! I'm done."

Then silence.

One of them out of the way! And now for Wood, waiting so quietly in the living-room. In two strides Flemming reached the door. He caught sight of the man stumbling toward him, a huge bull-like fellow, roaring as he came.

Flemming jerked up his gun—pulled at the trigger, but no detonation followed. Misfire? Again he pulled the trigger and again came the snick of the hammer instead of a flash and a roar. The —— gun was empty! No time to reload now. He whirled the heavy weapon above his head and sent it crashing into his opponent's stomach as the latter closed in. Wood went down, grunting, the breath knocked out of his body.

Flemming stooped to retrieve his gun and as he did so a shot whizzed above his head, fired by Scanlon, the man who should have been dead! But Scanlon was not dead. Flemming's bullet had grazed his ribs by his heart and all good-humor had gone from his voice as he shouted:

"By ——! Wait till I get you, you ——!"

And he fired once more.

Flemming ducked and raced toward the open door. Nothing seemed to be in its appointed place. He tripped against a table, sent a cascade of dishes clattering to the floor, stumbled and cut his hands on the broken pieces. Blinded by sweat he cursed himself for a fool as he crawled on, keeping down out of sight.

Why had he thrown away his gun? He could have dodged clear of that lumbering brute—easily. And where was Nidjo, where the divers? Had they all fled at the sound of the shots—left him in the lurch? He wormed his way across the threshold and out onto the veranda. Behind him, crunching over the broken china, Scanlon hurried in pursuit.

Flemming leaped to his feet, shouting:

"Ruva! Nitchi! Penelo! Where are you? Come quickly!"

With them at his heels, rounding up these two men would not be difficult. But what could have happened to them?

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As he sprang down the steps a pair of arms closed like a steel trap about his knees and he went over, striking his head on one of the stones bordering the path.

Never physically strong, he suddenly fought with the strength of ten men, unaware of the deep gash across his forehead. Blood blinded him—but the night was dark; blind, too, must the other man be. They went rolling over beneath the bushes, whimpering as they clawed for a strangle hold at each other's throat.

Then Flemming was caught by the hair on his head and dragged off his choking prey. He yelled, mad with hate:

"Let go! Let me finish him!"

And Scanlon, thin-lipped and cruel, struck him at the base of the skull with the butt end of his gun. Flemming pitched forward onto the path where he lay defenseless, arms outstretched, his bloodied face turned toward the stars.

AT FIRST he was aware only of a dull pain at the back of his head, a pain which at intervals blazed up like a tongue of flame, red and hot and shriveling. Again it seemed to him that some one had placed a heavy heel on his naked brain and was bearing down upon it in time to the sickening beat of his heart.

For a long while he was conscious of nothing but this absorbing pain, impersonally noting its rise and fall. He knew neither fear nor anxiety nor anger, nothing mattered but the throbbing agony radiating from his head.

By slow degrees came voices growing ever more distinct, piercing through the black fog in which he hung suspended. One word stood out insistently—

"Flemming."

And his brain pounced upon it, repeating it interminably until, articulating slowly, he found himself saying:

"*I* am Flemming. *I* am Flemming."

Then, without opening his eyes, he noted how his body lay cramped and twisted. His face pressed against a hard surface, his right arm awkwardly flung out behind him, the knuckles of his left hand wedged beneath his jaw, and his legs thrown out so that he lay curved back upon himself like a drawn bow.

All the time the voices were reaching him more clearly as the black clouds thinned and finally tore asunder. Fragment by fragment the events of the night came back to him, tantalizingly vague, but each one more definite than the last. He groaned and raised his leaden eye-lids. He lay against a wall, in a corner, thrown there like an empty sack. Only much later did he realize that the room was his living-room in his own house.

There was a babel of tongues, excited, laughing, blasphemous, drunken. The air was hot, acrid with tobacco smoke, pungent with alcohol. Flemming coughed and rolled away from the wall on to his back. The yellow light streaming down from the lamp hanging above the table blinded him. He blinked and slowly raised a hand to shield his eyes. The back of his hand was dark—dark red, blood-stained and sticky.

"My own blood," pondered Flemming in wonderment. "Scanlon struck me. I remember——"

The loud voices ceased, some one standing above him asked—

"How you feelin' *now?*"

That was Scanlon's voice.

"Tough bird, all right," put in Wood, leaning over the table to look. "But you did him dirt! You'd think one rap like that over the coco would be enough, now wouldn't you?" He tittered and added drunkenly: "You don't know your own strength, Scanlon. Oh, do be careful!"

Hiccupping, he dropped back in his chair to stare vacantly at the ceiling.

"Tough," grunted Scanlon. "He is! If I hadn't beaned him he'd have killed Mapuna in about another second."

Mapuna! The name dinned in Flemming's ears. Mapuna, the half-breed Lifou boy—the thieving diver! Mapuna it was who had tried to rob and kill him. Flemming had sent him to Suva where he had been sentenced to a year's imprisonment, and when he heard the verdict Mapuna had openly sworn that some day he would even the score. And he had kept his word.

Flemming saw him now sitting in a rocker with his feet on the table, a cigaret between his lips, a glass in his hand. He was short and plump, golden-skinned, with wavy black hair brushed back off his forehead. His features were well molded and small, almost effeminately pretty—full red lips, lustrous eyes shining behind long black lashes, and smooth cheeks. Yet he was corrupt, vicious, brutal; cunning always and a fiend when angered.

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He smiled at Flemming, and behind his parted lips his teeth were clenched. He said in a high-pitched voice:

"You look sick, Mr. Flemming. Have a drink!"

And he tossed the contents of his glass in the fallen man's face.

"Aw, leave the poor —— alone," grunted Wood. "We got what we come after. Now lay off him. Yuh can't blame him if he's a bit peeved."

"We have found the pearls," gently explained Mapuna. "Your pearls—the little pearls I risked my life to get for you." He tapped his chest with his finger tips. "You forgot what I said, eh? You never expected to see poor, ragged Mapuna again? He was a dog to be robbed of his bone——"

Flemming lay inert, staring with blurred eyes at the men before him: Wood, heavy-jowled, paunchy and dull; Scanlon, hatchet-faced, hawk-eyed, a coarse gray stubble covering his cheeks and his weak chin; and Mapuna, the savage, made doubly cruel by the dash of tainted white blood in his veins.

"They have found the pearls," Flemming told himself.

And then it dawned upon him quite suddenly—

"They have robbed me!"

The idea gained force as he grappled with it and turned it over and over in his mind. Vaguely he saw Scanlon kneeling beside him and heard in some confused fashion shreds of Mapuna's recital:

"Never forgot for one minute— Waited and prayed for the time to come— Scanlon and Wood on the beach at Suva— Good friends— Stole Becker's ketch——"

With a gesture of impatience Scanlon cut short the speaker. He grunted:

"This guy's all in. 'E won't last long. Let's show 'im how pretty they look before 'e goes phut."

He caught Flemming beneath the arms, dragged him across the floor and let him drop into a chair. Flemming fell forward, his chin resting on the table.

"Aw," said Wood, "give him a drink. We're having a good time. Don't want to be too nasty. Now, do we?"

"Bottles 're all empty," he went on, throwing them one after another to crash through the window panes. "Get some more, Mapuna. Want to give frien' Flemming a lil' spot of sumpun good." He laughed and sagely wagged his head. "Good ol' Flemming—going to croak! Must show him suit'ble honors."

"Good idea," agreed Scanlon. "Revive the blighter. Go on, Jimmy, call the boy."

Mapuna clapped his hands and Nidjo, smiling uncertainly, slipped into the room with a fresh supply of whisky. He placed the tray on the table without so much as a sidelong glance at his master, and waited for further orders, standing quietly behind Mapuna's chair.

Neat and clean in his tight-fitting white jacket and baggy trousers he alone was self-possessed, unhurried. He showed no flicker of excitement or dread. From the first he had submissively accepted the inevitable and bent to the service of the intruders as docilely as he had served Flemming. Wood had found him asleep in his bunk and had threatened to kill him if he stirred. He had offered no resistance; in fact, smiling a little, he had led the way to the padlocked chest where the pearls were kept, in an oblong tin box, and had watched unmoved while they smashed the lock.

Even Mapuna forgot his resentment when the Javanese humbled himself before him.

"I do not want to die," explained Nidjo in his careful English. "Take me away with you, please, for I have been on Kariyara too long and I am tired of the place."

He had helped shut the divers in the stout-walled godown where the tools were kept and had pointed out to Wood where the loose cash was to be found. He stood now, meek and unobtrusive, at Mapuna's elbow and grinned when he saw Scanlon pour half a tumblerful of raw whisky down Flemming's throat.

The latter choked, gasped, choked again, and the pain at the back of his head receded. He stared uncertainly at Nidjo and muttered to himself:

"He's still alive. That's queer. I thought they'd killed him."

If Nidjo was free and unharmed there was hope! Nidjo knew how to act in an emergency. He could be trusted. The numbness left Flemming's brain. There must be some means of overcoming these three drink-sodden thugs. For the first time hate swept him, impotent as yet, but slowly kindling, until at last it annihilated all else.

The box on the table caught his eye. A black japanned box whose lid had been ripped off. Its contents shimmered in the yellow lamplight. He stared, and then came

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remembrance and infinite relief. For his treasure was still safe! They had found only the seed pearls and the odds and ends—the chaff he did not bother to hide. These were the malformed, faulty pearls—bird's eyes, turtle backs, ring arounds, buttons—he used for trade and barter, the stuff with which he deceived the people at Suva and Vila. The real treasure was—elsewhere.

And he understood Nidjo's cleverness until he recalled that not even the Javanese knew where the real gems were kept—one hundred and three of them, flawless and perfect; eleven of them well over eighty grains.

He glanced from face to face, apprehensive lest they discover his secret. Wood was pawing at Mapuna's arm and calling him his brother, but Scanlon though he drank steadily was still alert. He kept poking his finger in among the pearls and at last grunted:

"D'you call this —— stuff worth risking our necks for, Mapuna? It ain't worth one 'undred quid, the whole blasted lot of it. Junk!"

Mapuna leered and answered complacently:

"I know pearls. This lot is worth much more than *that*. At least five are perfect. You see——"

Then Nidjo's clear voice cut sharply above the half-breed's maudlin tone:

"There are more. Ask Mr. Flemming! He hide the best somewhere in the house. Do not know where, me. But they are here. I am sure."

For an instant Flemming sat dumfounded, incredulous, then all his latent anger focused upon the traitor who stood grinning not six feet away. All physical weakness left him. He hurled himself forward, reaching out for Nidjo's throat, and Scanlon tripped him so that he fell headlong at the feet of the Javanese.

Uproar followed. He was kicked and kicked again, and Scanlon bellowed at him:

"Get up, you ——! Get up!"

But he could not move. Passively he submitted to the blows, barely attempting to shield his face and his ribs. He knew now that the odds were hopeless and knew, too, for a certainty that very soon he would die. One resolve he made, however, and it gave him the strength to endure Scanlon's brutal onslaught: If they wanted the pearls they must find them; not by a word or a sign would he give the hiding-place away.

He found himself picked up and thrown onto the table. Wood bent over him, pleading:

"You been hurt enough. Speak up, where's the stuff?"

Obtaining no answer he dug his blunt fingers into Flemming's throat and bellowed—

"If you won't talk I'll——"

"Lay off 'im," ordered Scanlon. "Don't kill 'im yet. I'll make 'im squeal. You, Mapuna, catch his left 'and and 'old it on the edge of the table—so."

Flemming struggled, but they held him fast. He felt a sharp stab of pain race through him as Scanlon bore down on his little finger. With difficulty he stifled the yell that arose to his lips.

"Now," said Scanlon. "You speak up or I'll break every finger in your —— hand. Going to speak? Better be quick!"

"No," choked Flemming. "I'll see you —— first!"

Then there came a grinding of bones in his hand, a slow torture of snapping tendons. Wave upon wave of agony swept him as the pressure increased. Once he moaned and Mapuna laughed at him. The bone broke with a crack and he fell back, bathed in sweat, shaken by uncontrollable spasms, but unconquered yet.

"——!" muttered Wood, awestruck. "Drop it, Scanlon. Not that again!"

"No?" growled Scanlon between set teeth. "Just watch!"

He jeered at Flemming:

"Another one going now. All set, fellow—or do you want to squeal?"

Not waiting for an answer, merciless, he wrenched at Flemming's hand and the breath came whistling through his teeth as the finger gave way.

Abruptly Flemming was no longer aware of his tortured body. All sensibility drained out of him; he felt numb and exhausted, quite indifferent to his fate.

Through the haze of smoke, in the shadows beyond the lamp-light, he saw Nidjo's burning eyes fixed upon him. The mask had dropped from the face of the Javanese—his mouth was bent in a smile, his nostrils, compressed and white, twitched a little. He seemed to gloat over Flemming's torment, waiting anxiously for the last surrender.

It was neither hate nor anger that wrenched an oath from Flemming's lips.

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He was no longer afraid, neither did he care whether he lost his treasure or not. Nothing mattered except one thing, one desire remained: To see Nidjo, the traitor, stretched out dead on the floor.

As Scanlon again took hold of him he cried out:

"Beneath the boards—in my room—by the head of the bed. They're there!"

IT WAS still black night. A restless wind blew gustily through the trees and rattled the dry thatch-palms on the roof. From the godown where the divers were locked came a low, sullen murmur of voices.

In the room the air was flat and stale, heavy with the fumes of spilled whisky, acrid with smoke.

"Half-past three," grunted Scanlon, nervously pacing the length of the room. "Nothing to do until morning."

Wood, his flabby face all pasty-white and shiny, nodded sleepily. He sat, dull-eyed, with his arms stretched out before him on the table, an empty tumbler in his hand.

"Done enough," he muttered thickly. "Need a rest."

"Rest!" Scanlon snarled. "We'll get no rest this side of Sydney. We're not through yet—and 'ere we 'ave to wait, just wait!"

Mapuna, a burnt-out cigaret between his lips, moved uneasily. He could not hope to find refuge in Australia; because of his color that door was closed against him. He must stay in the islands, roving from place to place, harried and hunted. At best he might reach Tahiti where they were said to ask few questions. At worst a noose awaited him on a scaffold in the yard of the Suva jail. And the noose suddenly loomed close.

He glanced at Nidjo who squatted by the wall, as placid as a graven image. He found himself hating the Javanese, fearing him. He snapped out:

"What the —— are you doing in here? Get me a drink!"

Nidjo bowed and obeyed, stepping carefully across Flemming's body as he went toward the kitchen.

They had almost forgotten Flemming, he lay so still and so quiet. But he had not forgotten them. Huddled on the floor amid the soiled wreckage of his home, his eyes closed, he fought an unceasing battle against his aching body and his sluggish brain. He waited, relaxed and motionless, marshaling his remaining strength, blindly hoping that before dawn his chance would come.

Scanlon's frayed temper grew worse. He cursed Wood for no reason except that Wood was too quiet. Then he turned upon Mapuna and sneered:

"Who thought of pinching Becker's ketch? Me or you? You blighter! And you got a third share of the loot. Blimey! Might think you was white! And that blasted coolie 'e's got half-dozen good buttons. Don't deserve none. I'd like to slit 'is —— throat for 'im, that's what."

He peered through the shattered window and added desperately:

"Won't it ever come daylight? I want to get away."

Not a muscle on Nidjo's face betrayed anxiety. He effaced himself and waited patiently in the shadows beyond the kitchen door for the storm to blow over. But Mapuna was quick to sense the threat. He was on his feet in a flash, tugging at his gun and screaming:

"I'll keep what I have! Try to take it!"

"Aw, give over, you two," grunted Wood. "What's the good o' fighting? He's only kidding you, Jimmy."

Scanlon's wrath subsided.

"It's this 'anging round doing nothing gets my goat," he grumbled. "Ain't there nothing we can do?"

"Still some liquor," suggested Wood, filling his own glass. "Have one?"

"Had enough."

"You, Jimmy?"

Mapuna drained a mug dry and dropped back in his seat, but his eyes never left Scanlon as the latter moved uneasily from spot to spot until he stopped to ferret in the drawer of a desk.

"Here we are," he exclaimed. "Pack of cards. What say to a game, fellows?"

"Nope," said Wood. "I bar cards. I got no luck."

"Jimmy'll play," confidently asserted Scanlon, patting the half-breed's shoulder. "It's close on four now. Play till sunrise, then we'll clear out."

Mapuna wavered.

"What stakes?" he asked.

"Oh, anything. Cut you through the pack—pearl against pearl. I'd rather lose every —— one of them than sit about 'ere—just thinking."

"Pearl against pearl," murmured Ma-

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puna, his fingers plucking nervously at the light down on his cheeks. "I don't know——"

"Yes, you do," declared Scanlon, riffling the deck between his long fingers. "Be a sport, Jimmy—and you might win 'em all. Come on. You cut first."

The half-breed gave way. All his life he had gambled—even in prison—and his luck was proverbial. And, whatever happened, he couldn't lose much. Cutting through the pack was a childish game.

He stretched out his hand and turned over the top card—the three of spades. Scanlon drew the king of diamonds.

"One to you," said Mapuna.

"Pay up," grunted Scanlon.

"When the hand is played——"

"Pay me now!"

The half-breed drew a pearl from the pocket of his belt and rolled it across the table.

He cut again—the ten of diamonds—and again he lost, for Scanlon's draw was a knave. His luck had deserted him. He was ten behind and then twelve behind. He won three times in succession only to lose more steadily than ever. He played slowly, cursing each draw, his hands shaking as he fumbled with the cards. He drank steadily, whining when Nidjo failed to keep his glass brimful. Even Wood was roused from his torpor and muttered to himself as he followed the game.

Scanlon, his thin lips pursed in an inaudible whistle, sat straight in his chair, watchful and alert, his hand ever and again straying toward his gun.

Hovering close at hand Nidjo watched them, answering their calls with alertness. Polite, urbane, silent, he slipped into the background and out of their minds. He became less noticeable than Flemming in a heap on the floor.

And the play went on to the monotonous accompaniment of Scanlon's—

"One to me!"

Time sped by. An almost imperceptible grayness crept across the sky, tarnishing the light of the stars. Vague outlines emerged from the darkness, a roof appeared where, in the fulness of night, no roof had been.

Still Scanlon won. Twenty-one, twenty-two! So it went, until without warning Mapuna's nerves snapped.

He drew an ace to Scanlon's deuce and he said:

"Pay me. I win!"

Scanlon laughed:

"Ace is low, Jimmy. You lose."

"That's a lie," shrieked Mapuna. "A lie! Pay me!"

He kicked back his chair and reached for his gun. Scanlon, firing from his pocket, shot him dead. He fell to the ground, sprawling across Flemming's legs.

"That's one won't bother us no more," muttered Scanlon. "You can 'ave what 'e left behind, Woody."

"Aw," grumbled Wood, "that was a fool thing to do—just because he was a bad loser."

"Well, 'e's out of the way," insisted Scanlon, his hand still on the gun in his pocket. "D'you want his stuff?"

"You —— ghoul!" hotly retorted Wood. "I ain't much good but I don't kill my mates. Take the stuff yourself."

"Call that thing a mate—that half-caste?"

It dawned upon Wood that Scanlon was hunting trouble, more trouble. There was a queer light behind his eyes, a new pitch to his voice, he sat with his head drawn back like a snake ready to strike, and as evil. Wood's dull brain awoke to the menace. He knew Scanlon all too well. He realized all at once that if he were to look away for one instant a bullet would end his life—and Scanlon would have all the loot to himself.

"Aw," he grunted placatingly. "Ease off, Scanlon. It's nearly sunup now—we better be moving."

"And you don't want Jimmy's pearls?"

"No, sir. You take 'em if you like."

Up flamed Scanlon's anger.

"Not good enough for you, eh? What the —— are you afraid of anyhow?"

"You," complained Wood. "You're a coward, that's what you are. You'd shoot from behind. You daren't fight fair."

"Who says?"

"I do. You know it, too. You'd like to be rid of me and have the pearls all to yourself. But——"

"You're right," jeered Scanlon. "You! You'd get drunk first night in Sydney and give the whole show away. I've a mind——"

"Steady on! Keep that gun down," ordered Wood. "If you're no coward you'll fight like a white man. Even break. You got a knife same as me, but," he shrugged

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his shoulders helplessly, "you're afraid—you wouldn't dare take a chance. You Limehouse dock-rat!"

Without a word Scanlon thrust the revolver back in his pocket and whipped a short machete out of its sheath at his belt. It was a murderous weapon, rounded at the tip and ground razor-sharp on both edges. Wood's knife was shorter, slightly curved, with a sharp stabbing point. He drew it as he lumbered clear of the first savage rush.

Light as a cat on his feet Scanlon circled about his slow-moving adversary. He ducked and he feinted, he slid within striking distance and leaped back out of reach of the gleaming blade. At last, sure of himself, he pounced. Down came the machete—and Wood, stolid and slow, parried the blow with his left forearm. As wrist met wrist the knife flew from Scanlon's hand to drop with a clatter on the floor. He jumped back, tugging frantically at his gun.

Then Wood, ponderous and inevitable, rushed him off his feet before he could draw clear. They stood locked chest to chest, Scanlon digging his nails into Wood's great arm, holding it above him. But the strain became unendurable, and Wood, looking down into the frightened eyes of his foe, felt his blood run boiling hot with the mad joy of the kill. With his left arm he crushed Scanlon to him, drawing him in closer and closer, squeezing all resistance out of him, hastening the end.

WHEN Mapuna dropped across his legs and lay dead where he dropped, Flemming moved not an inch even though very soon the weight of the body pressing against his ankles became almost intolerable.

By every law of probability he, too, should have been dead long since, and he lay so very still that not even Nidjo, ever watchful, gave him a second glance. But he was still alive and so long as he did not attempt to alter his position the pain in his head was bearable. He was neither a big man nor a strong one, he understood quite clearly that with every beat of his heart some of his scanty store of energy was draining away, yet he waited patiently, blindly, doggedly, hoping where there was no possible hope, clinging to life by will-power alone.

He dare not even open his eyes. When he glanced down at Mapuna he did so from between his lashes—and he saw peeping from the half-breed's hip pocket the black, angular butt of an automatic. His fingers were within inches of it. Inches! Yet he must not move for the Javanese stood almost above him, so close that Flemming could watch the throb of a corded vein just behind Nidjo's ankle.

Then arose the storm that was to destroy his destroyers. He heard the voices rise angrily, heard the rush and the snarl and Scanlon's sudden cry of fear.

Nidjo? Cautiously he peered to one side, but the Javanese had moved out of sight.

Could he reach the gun, seize it quickly enough and shoot straight? What if Nidjo were behind him, ready to strike him down? He moved, moved again. Now it was too late to stop. The slightest muscular movement became a gigantic effort. His slow gestures were those of a man in a dream. He braced himself on his left elbow, his maimed hand flat on the floor. His fingers, reaching out, brushed the gun butt——

(Over there, beyond the pool of light, Wood held Scanlon in a bear-like hug.)

The palm of his hand closed about the weapon. But he could not pull it out! It was caught against the seam of the pocket and would not move, though he tugged and tugged with all his dwindling strength.

His outstretched arm became numb and heavy. Slowly his hold on the gun relaxed and his hand fell away, empty. He sat whimpering a little, weakly cursing the dead man who had cheated him. But he overcame the weakness, fought it down and, grinding his teeth, let himself fall forward so that he might get a better purchase on the gun.

He pulled at it and it moved. One finger passed through the guard and closed about the trigger.

Then Nidjo, grinning with all his teeth, slipped quickly out of the shadows and stamped with his naked heel on Flemming's broken hand, stamped with all his might.

Shrill with agony Flemming's yell arose. He lurched over sidewise, writhing with pain.

Even Wood in his moment of triumph heard the cry; Scanlon, with a knife at his throat, heard it too. They forgot their quarrel, they broke away, they backed away from the Javanese who was moving toward them with a long-barreled Colt in his hand. Step by step, in silence, they

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retreated before him until they stood against the wall.

Flemming's outcry had subsided, stillness filled the room; through the broken panes of the window came a freshening breeze, the forerunner of dawn. The oil in the lamp overhead was all but gone, the charred wick smoldered, powdering the air with drifting black particles.

"Face to the wall," said Nidjo in his singsong voice. "Put the hands behind the back."

Wood blundered. He mistook the low-spoken order for a sign of weakness. He still had his knife.

"I'll call your —— bluff," he began. "You——"

A bullet smashed its way through his elbow and the knife fell from his hand. Almost before the sound of the shot died away came Nidjo's whispered command:

"Face to the wall. Put the hands behind the back."

This time they obeyed, cringing as they turned away.

Nidjo laughed at them.

"Do not move," he said. "I tie the hands. First Mr. Scanlon who is so dangerous. Then Mr. Wood. And then," he chuckled, "you see what I do to Mr. Flemming."

But at the moment he could not see Flemming, for he was making fast Scanlon's ankles with a strip of cloth torn from his belt.

Flemming was fighting one last, desperate battle against his flagging body. Open-mouthed, his eyes blurred, he strained and strained until once again he propped himself on his elbow and slowly levered himself over so that his fingers might reach Mapuna's automatic. He went through the motions blindly, no longer aware of any definite purpose except that he *must* take hold of that black butt. Then other events would follow—connected in some fashion with the droning voice over in the gathering twilight beyond the table.

The effort required of him was titanic. His hand groped across the floor and up Mapuna's hip. His nails scratched and clawed at the coarse material, clinging to every inch as if he were raising some enormous weight.

And the voice, small and thin in his ears, went on and on—Nidjo's voice drifting across vast spaces:

"You must not die. No, no. I need you to guide the boat for me. Yes—and I take along one-two divers to handle the sails. They come if I pay."

"And you think," exclaimed Scanlon, "you think you can——"

"It is for me to talk," Nidjo went on. "I keep quiet eleven years, now I talk. Eleven years I wait and I wait! Watching Mr. Flemming catch pearls for Nidjo. I see him catch one big pearl; two, three! He give up trading the shell, just hunt for pearl, and he say to me—

" 'Place not so rich!' "

"I smile and say 'Yes?' and I wait. Eleven years! Now I take the pearls, for me."

He made fast the last knot binding Scanlon's arms and legs and moved over to Wood, who, faint from loss of blood, stood resting his forehead against the wall.

"So long I wait!" sighed Nidjo. "And always I cook and sweep and always I watch for you. I know some day you come and now you guide me when I have done with Mr. Flemming." He spat out: "I hate him! He save and he save and he save! Nights he close the door and count the pearls and write on a paper. I watch through the hole and I see him count. Always more to count. And always he want more. Hungry for pearls to count and weigh. And so is Nidjo. Soon I kill him!"

"Going to be killed!" the words ran through Flemming's brain. "Going to be killed!"

He must hurry or be killed—so much was clear to him. His hand brushed against the striated butt. Up a little higher, a bit farther forward! Up! Now he had it! At long last he held it. It slid from the pocket and at once was too heavy to support. It dragged down his arm to the floor.

"Must hold it up," he told himself. "Come on now, Flemming, you're going to do it! Stick it! Lift the —— thing. Lift it!"

Over by the wall Nidjo's task was nearly done. Scanlon was helpless and Wood, his arm dripping blood, was whining for mercy.

"Can't you stop it somehow?" he begged. "I'm going all giddy in the head."

Nidjo laughed as he lashed together the wounded man's wrists.

"To lose red blood will be good for you," he said. "You are too strong."

"But I tell you——"

"I make a hole in the other arm," Nidjo warned him. "The gun is here in my belt."

"I'm all in," complained Wood. "You got to stop it."

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"Perhaps it is well I should finish you," murmured Nidjo, drawing his revolver. "One man to guide me is enough. I——"

But he was not quick enough. Wood swayed back, away from the wall and fell heavily, all of one piece, bringing down Nidjo with him.

Cursing, the Javanese sprang to his feet. He kicked Wood in the face, savagely, for no reason, and went groping about for his gun. He caught sight of it over by the table. He bent down.

He found himself staring at Flemming who lay twisted over on his side, covering him with an automatic.

"Stand still, Nidjo! Stand still!" croaked Flemming. "I'll plug you if you move."

And the Javanese, seeing how the muzzle of the gun wavered and wabbled, seeing how it sagged down toward the ground, laughed in Flemming's face.

"Ho!" he exclaimed. "Am I afraid of a dead man? Go to your grave and stay there."

"Not dead," gasped Flemming. "Not dead—yet. I'll plug you——"

But the gun would not come off the floor! Nidjo, grinning with delight, came slowly toward him, walking easily, arms hanging loose at his sides.

"You can not shoot," he said tauntingly, "and I shall hurt that hand—you have not forgotten that hand? Eleven years I wait and I hate you. I wait for the chance and now——"

Flemming's trigger-finger contracted and fire leaped from the muzzle of the automatic. Almost at point-blank range a bullet tore through the calf of Nidjo's leg and the force of the impact halted him in his stride. And Flemming fired again and again. Jaded nerve and aching muscle answered the last summons of the pain-dimmed brain. He saw his bullets strike home—calf and hip and belly and heart!

The expression on Nidjo's face remained unchanged. The first look of astonishment persisted, his hands still hung at his sides. He went down, striking against the table as he fell. It overturned and spilled upon his back its load of glasses and bottles and cigar-ends.

The noise died away, the lamp flickered and went out in one last gust of black smoke. Scanlon, in a corner where he had dragged himself, mumbled incoherently.

After a while Flemming moved. He drew first one foot and then the other from beneath Mapuna's body. He could not stand up. He crawled very, very slowly across the floor, pausing many times to rest. Wood's inert body barred his way, he dragged himself past it unaware and indifferent to the glazing eyes that followed him so apprehensively.

He passed the threshold on hands and knees, he rolled off the steps. The gravel bit into his hands. Yet more slowly he went on, dragging himself along the path. Twenty minutes, an eternity, to cover twenty yards! He reached the door of the godown.

"Ruva," he whispered. "Ruva, are you in there?"

A shout answered him:

"*Hai!* Master, let us out! Let us out!"

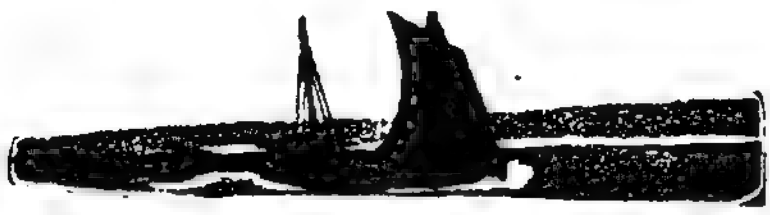
Raising himself to his knees he clawed at the heavy bolt. Screeching, it slid back.

A brown arm, lithe and strong, caught him and held him up. He was going and going fast now. Queer how far away Ruva's face seemed to be!

Beyond the trees, out of the sea shot the sun pouring golden shafts of light upon Kariyara. The last clouds dissolved, the mists grew thin, the waters of the lagoon turned from black to translucent green. Broad day at last!

Flemming said loudly so that his voice might carry across the ever-widening space:

"Diving is over. I pay off today. Take the dead from the house and bury them. But Nidjo—take him and throw him in the lagoon. He's kept the crabs waiting eleven years."



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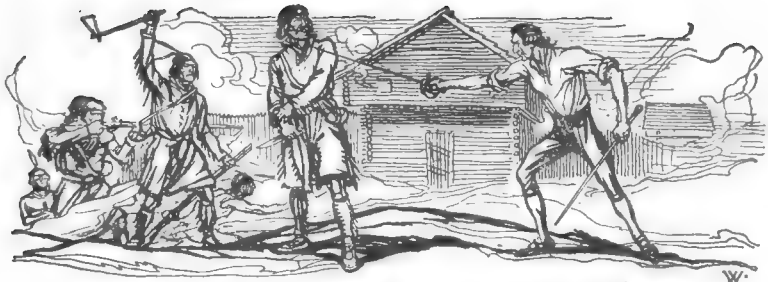

IROQUOIS! IROQUOIS!

A Five-Part Story ·· Conclusion ····

By Hugh Pendexter

Author of "Rifle Rule," "Old Misery," etc.

The first part of the story briefly retold in story form.

IN 1764, eleven years before the colonies dug up the red ax with England, I had been brought to the Canajoharie district of New York by my Uncle David Whittlesey. Here I learned to know the Indians as brothers, and the Mohawk leader, Joseph Brant, as a friend.

Best of all I knew Horace Martin, self-styled "last of the macaronis," who forever prated of the decline of manners in these times. His incessant tirades earned him the nickname "Mad" Martin.

Not until 1774 did Martin tell me that he had a daughter.

"You—married!" I cried out in surprize.

"My wife was of Seneca-French blood. She died when Nancy was born. Nancy I left in Montreal with her grandfather. Now she is coming to me," he explained.

A few days later Nancy Martin arrived. She was a strange mixture of white and Indian, lapsing at will into the tricks of either race, and knowing the customs of both.

One morning my uncle gave me a beautiful new rifle, with a secret compartment in the stock, and in a few words told me that there was danger of war. To my inquiries he replied:

"Donald MacDonald, the Johnstown Highlander, is traveling around and talking loud. Sheriff White is sending a man named Newberry up and down the river to threaten the settlers. But our Tryon County Committee of Safety will stop their tongues."

His words were borne out by Peter Bolduc, a French-Canadian trader who arrived a few days later.

"Tell your uncle," he warned me, "that a call has been sent out for a Continental Congress to meet on September fourth in Philadelphia."

I hastened to the Martin house and learned from Nancy that in case of war the Indians might very easily side with England. As she was a member of the Wolf clan, Nancy knew many of the Indians' secrets.

The next day I had a fight with the drunken Newberry for insulting Nancy, and knocked him down, breaking his jaw.

This grievance, added to Donald MacDonald's hatred for me and my uncle, because of our siding with the colonies against the king, soon brought a warrant for my arrest.

"You'll not be long in jail, Benajah," my uncle told me.

"Let him try to make trouble and we'll make an example Tryon County law-breakers will long remember," cried MacDonald.

Outraged to the bottom of my soul, I set out, leaving my uncle behind, for the jail at Johnstown.

HOWEVER, I stayed in jail but a short time. Nancy came to Joseph Brant, and told him that I was a member of the Wolf clan, because I had been adopted by a Wolf woman for saving her son. It was this relationship which freed me, although I had not been legally adopted by the clan.

On our way home Nancy told me that Captain Robert Welles had written her father, and that he was moving to Cherry Valley.

Long after Nancy had moved away, in the Summer of 1775, I came home one day to find a note from my uncle saying that he was trailing Long Gentry, the renegade.

I was terrorized when I heard that following my uncle was another renegade, "Injun" McFee. Here was a real danger: My uncle was between two enemies.

A few days later, following my uncle's trail, I found him murdered. The little black book in which he kept the names of the Committee of Safety was missing.

Leaving my uncle to be buried by friends and urged on by them, I started again to hunt down the murderer.

Going cautiously through the woods, I heard a commanding question:

"Who are you?"

I halted.

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"Richard Claus," I improvised.

Satisfied that I was really a Claus and a king's man, my questioner told me that he was Long Gentry.

I covered my surprize, and learned that Sir John Johnson, who ruled Johnstown, was aiding his own family to get into Canada and would go there himself in time. It was the Johnsons in Canada, who with money were pushing the Indians to depredation on the whites.

After Gentry took all my money, he suddenly drew from his pocket a little book: My uncle's.

"Here, read this," he said.

Slowly I read off the names, until, Gentry leaning over the book and off his guard, I leaped upon him. In a few mad whirls he carried us both into the river, from which I rose, his knife in my hand and his blood coloring the water.

On regaining the bank, I stared into the eyes of Peter Bolduc.

WE DRAGGED Gentry's body to land and searched it. In his pocket I found a paper on which was a message in cipher, which read, when translated:

Waiting to receive Shawnee belt with two axes from Unadilla.

The message was from Sir John Johnson and was to be delivered to Guy Johnson in Canada. What his plans were, I had no way of knowing, and decided that I must start out for Unadilla where was to be held the council of the clans.

On the way we met several Indians, whom we suspected were carrying a black belt to the council, and who allowed us to pass in the Indian paths. After that a friendly Oneida called Tall Rock accompanied us to within six miles of an Indian town, when he suddenly disappeared.

Farther on our trail, we came to a white man who was attempting to steal her jewelry from an Oneida woman. I earned the thanks of the woman when I forced him to hand back the trinkets he had taken and drove him away. Later, however, we came to a small encampment of white men—renegades—where I was recognized.

"He's the one as made Enver chaw dirt," said one man, with a show of hostility.

And my explanations of Enver's licking were hardly over when one of them recognized Long Gentry's gun. With a brief and pleasant falsehood that Gentry had sold it, Peter Bolduc saved us further embarrassment, and we left.

Across the Susquehanna we met friends, the Sliters, who were overjoyed at hearing of the death of Gentry. The Sliters were confident that Joseph Brant would never head a band of Indians who would do the bidding of the British.

As Peter and I were going through the woods, Tall Rock suddenly came upon us. In a moment we learned that the Oneida woman, whom I had saved from ignominy, was his wife, and that he craved something to do as reward for me. Knowing that I had only to say the word and he would do anything, I sent him back to see if the Indians I had met on the road were carrying a black belt, and to get it for me.

In the hush of the forest we waited hours, until, without warning of his approach, Tall Rock again stood before us. Into my hands he slipped the black belt, and then disappeared.

The hue and cry along the river warned us that the theft had been discovered, and that we must be on our way.

By daybreak we were miles away and had found a hiding-place, where Peter buried the belt. The rest of the day was spent in sleep.

Satisfied that we were no longer followed, we set out again that night for Unadilla to learn what we could of the procedure at the council of Indians.

At one place we saved the Cully family from a party of renegades headed by my enemy, Newberry.

At Cherry Valley we found the Martins and MacDonald, who was trying to find out from Nancy the tenor of the Indian feeling. After my unsuccessful attempt to arrest him in the name of the Tryon Committee of Safety, he hurried from the valley, probably to carry what news he had to Guy Johnson in Canada and to send a scout to Sir John at Johnstown.

Nancy told me that Joseph Brant was going to England and that as he would be there during the Winter there need be no fear of an Indian uprising.

Thus, with my fears allayed, I returned home, and put the affairs of the farm in order.

Two weeks later I was a member of Daniel Morgan's riflemen and was off to starve and freeze in Benedict Arnold's expedition against Quebec.

MORE than a year later I returned to the colonies by way of the sea and New York, after having been during that time a prisoner in Canada.

I at once made my way back to my home, where I heard repeated stories of Indian uprisings. Refugees were pouring into Albany over the Scoharie Road, when I hastened to Cherry Valley, fearing for the safety of Horry Martin and his daughter.

On the way I learned that the Johnsons were planning to get their silver-plate into Canada, to be used in aiding the Tory cause. After setting this plan to naught and learning that Unadilla and Oghwaga were being used as a supply-base by Joseph Brant and Walter Butler and their Indian following, I hurried on.

I arrived at Cherry Valley and found the town peaceful. Here in the forest Joseph Brant came to me and warned me that the whites must leave within five days.

"They say," he added, "that you killed the white man who killed your uncle. That is good. But remember, you do not carry my road-belts now. Go away."

Suddenly realizing that Cherry Valley was indeed in great danger, I hurried into town. There I told what I had heard and also renewed my friendship with Tall Rock, the Oneida, for whose dead wife Nancy Martin performed the "Dance for the Dead," thereby relieving Tall Rock of all further mourning.

In spite of my warning message, Cherry Valley settled down to a quiet belief that Joseph Brant and his Indians were soon going into Winter quarters and that all danger was over until the next Summer.

Tall Rock, Bolduc and I were occupied continually with scouting. One day I came upon an Indian, whom I believed dead, lying in the woods. When I approached him, he got to his feet and attacked me I was sorry, after having killed him, to recognize him as a former schoolmate. He had a message from Molly Brant, Sir William Johnson's red wife, telling that five hundred men had left a Seneca town to maraud the valley.

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With this information I made my way back to Cherry Valley and found that my news was stale. There was plenty of evidence, gathered by Bolduc, that Brant expected to make the little settlement a target, although the five days' grace was long since up.

The next afternoon, while scouting I was almost captured by a band of Indians west of the valley. I succeeded in eluding them and in finding out that Brant had sent a few men with a drove of cattle up to Lake Oneida, while the larger part of his band remained near the valley, ready for an attack.

For an hour I rested, then I started back to the settlement.

IT BEGAN snowing. I lost my course, but instinct kept me in the general direction. An hour before dawn I was near a high hill, a mile southwest of the valley settlement. On this the enemy were camped, concealed from the village by a thick growth of evergreens. From their lofty outlook they could watch every move made in the settlement. A drizzling rain set in with occasionally flurries of snow. But my hopes were high as I started in the dim light for the cabins, moving carefully now that the race was all but ended. At the best it would be a matter of minutes if I reached the fort ahead of the assault. As I broke through the wood to make a dash openly for it, I saw a man on a horse jogging along ahead of me. He had a blanket over his head to keep out the rain. I called to him twice before he heard me and glanced back.

"Indians! Indians! Ride! Ride!" I yelled.

He seemed to be paralyzed. Perhaps he did not understand my hoarsely shouted words. He held his horse at a standstill and gaped at me as I ran toward him. Then two Indians ran from the woods on the other side of the road and discharged their guns. The man gave a lurch and all but fell to the ground. He recovered his balance and, with a scream of terror, thumped his heels against his nag's belly and went galloping toward the settlement, yelling as he rode. As I raced on behind him the Iroquois began streaming from the woods.

"They're coming! Indians coming! Fort yourselves!" I cried to the cabins.

The man a-horseback already had set the cabin doors to slamming. Some of the people, scantily dressed, were making for the fort. I met several officers, running from their sleeping quarters to gain the fort. When I came to the Wells house the fellow on the horse was clinging to his side and screaming to Colonel Alden, who stood at an open window:

"Thousands of 'em are coming! Thousands of 'em! They've shot me! We'll all be killed!"

"You're excited and giving a false alarm. I have scouts down the valley——"

"Your scouts are dead or prisoners! Brant and Butler will be here within five minutes!" I broke in.

"I can't believe—" he began.

Then hundreds of red throats, sounding the war-whoop down the valley-road, drove all skepticism from his head. The cry was repeated west of the settlement, and from the woods on the east behind Dunlop's school. We were being attacked on three sides. Only in the north did the way remain open, and people were running in that direction toward the high ridge. The vagrant snow flakes and thin rain blurred the vision.

As I turned to race on and spread the alarm, Colonel Alden jumped from the window and started for the fort. When I glanced back he was down on his face and an Iroquois was tearing off his scalp. A heavy gun-fire was added to the exulting shouts of the invaders.

Several Indians jostled me in passing, taking me for a Tory. They joined other savages who had suddenly surrounded Mr. Dunlop's cabin. I heard a Mohawk crying out that the aged minister and his daughter were not to be harmed, nor their cabin burned. I afterward learned this protector of the Dunlops was Little Aaron. I had no fears for the Wells family as Robert Wells was an old and intimate friend of Sir William Johnson and Colonel John Butler.

The Mitchell house was attacked and the savages were inside, butchering Mrs. Mitchell and two of her three children and leaving the third frightfully mangled. This foul work was done with awful celerity. It was then that I fired my rifle and brought down one of the murderers. As I reloaded, the cabin burst into flames.

Now the soldiers were firing from the fort and the crash of their gun-fire was accented by the sullen boom of a cannon. But in the dark, dismal early light there was difficulty in distinguishing settler from Tory. The Iroquois, working in small bands and taking advantage of information

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forced from the nine prisoners, were the first to enter the settlement. Then the white men began to take a hand, and the smoke from the burning cabins was stifling at times. A heavy fire was kept up on the fort to prevent the troops from making a sortie. Had our soldiers left cover for any distance, the list of victims would have been even greater.

From the surrounding woods occasionally came the shrill scream of some poor man or woman hunted to death. With rifle loaded, I resumed my race for the Martin cabin. None of the enemy recognized me as an American. One white man, with head partly shaved and attired like a Seneca, jumped before me and commanded:

"Turn back to the fort! It's no time for looting!"

The bony hand of the Hooded One touched his shoulder when I dashed the butt of my gun into his painted face. A few steps farther on I met Nancy Martin. She was wearing her Seneca dress and was calling out to the Indians to stop their bloody work and ransom their prisoners. On seeing me she cried:

"Our cabin is safe. Go there! Get the children there!"

Then she was gone in the smoke and the rain.

I knew no Indian would harm her if he recognized her as Martin's daughter. Yet I would have turned and followed her, and probably would have been brained at the outset, had it not been for the hoarse and angry bawling of white voices at the Martin cabin near-by.

The cannon at the fort was still firing. Miss Nancy had believed her cabin was a sanctuary; and so it would have been if only the red wolves were attacking. Now a man was yelling:

"Drag him out! Drag the —— old fox out! Come out here, Martin. I'm Lesker. You'n your gal talked 'bout me 'busing that boy. I'll have your heart for that!"

I threw up my rifle, and the flat of an ax hit me on the head and caused me to stagger around foolishly and drop my gun. Strong hands gripped my arms and brought them back and slipped a cord from elbow to elbow. And Joseph Brant was ordering:

"Keep behind me, Whittlesey! Keep close to me."

And he made off toward the fort without realizing the peril Mr. Martin was in.

I advanced toward the cabin. Five men were standing at the door, pounding it with the butts of their guns. Now they stepped back as the door suddenly opened. Out stepped the last of the macaronis and faced the five of them. He carried his cane outstretched from his left side. In his right hand he held his small sword. And he minced and strutted even as he had when as a lad I called on him to borrow books. His coat was off and his waistcoat was off; and the sleeve of his right arm was rolled up nearly to the shoulder. Despite his thin figure I could see the muscles bunch and swell and the smooth play of strength through his wrist and forearm, as he daintily gestured with the sword.

"Dogs! You've called too early on Horry Martin—you! You've interrupted his toilette," he shrilled rebukingly.

"You —— old fop!" roared Lesker, jumping forward with a butcher knife. "I've vowed I'd have your heart——"

Without shifting his position Mr. Martin gave a lightning thrust. Lesker stepped back and coughed slightly. His companions were amused at the scene. They believed their companion was afraid and roared abuse at him, mixed with some laughter. Lesker tried to explain, but could not talk because of the blood filling his mouth.

"The old rat knifed him with the long slicker!" one of the ruffians incredulously cried.

Lesker collapsed on the wet ground and proceeded to bleed to death very quietly. Possibly the four remaining guns were empty, for the men began attacking my friend with knives and axes.

"Blaze me, scum! But you're —— awkward!" Mr. Martin shrilly taunted, as he darted the point of his cane into a man's eye and almost at the same moment spitted a red-headed brute through the throat. The man with the wounded eye fell back, nursing his hurt and screaming he could not see. He would have turned away to find easier game, had I not advanced and changed his plans. I could not use my hands, but my feet were free; and I called out—

"Get this one, Mr. Martin."

And I drove my foot into the small of the creature's back and sent him on to his face. He had barely touched the ground before my old friend ran him through and through.

Stepping back and saluting with the sword he called out:

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"Thank's Benajah. It was neighborly of you. I didn't know you'd returned."

I leaped toward him and directed—

"Cut the cord from my arms!"

A pistol cracked behind me and the lead skimmed my ear and hit the poor man in the chest. I whirled about as the two men were about to finish me. A savage leaped between us, shrieking the war-whoop. Then he paused and glared into the face of the two villains, and rejoiced—

"At Tunadilla you chased a woman of The Rock into the river!"

Again sounded the terrible cry, and the heavy ax rose and fell, and the last of Mr. Martin's visitors were dead and being dragged behind the cabin where I have no doubt they were neatly scalped.

"Benajah, lad," softly called Mr. Martin.

I DROPPED on my knees, my ears closed to the gun-fire and booming cannon. Twenty houses were burning and fully as many barns. Mr. Martin tried to smooth the torn lace on his left sleeve.

"Look after Nancy a bit, Benajah," he murmured. "A good child, but impulsive. She lacks poise. Elemental. ——, lad! So you saw it! I pride myself I've made a good ending. Poor stage. Poor background. If the fellows could only know!"

His breathing troubled him; then he kept very still. Believing him to be dead, I struggled to my feet. Then he moved his head and faintly told me—

"This cursed climate will be the end of me, lad."

He propped himself up on one elbow and stared intently beyond me. I whirled about, but only the billowy smoke, the red, stabbing flames, and the blurred figures of men, fighting and slaughtering down the street, met my gaze. I was in no immediate danger. I faced about again just as Mr. Martin gave a little smile and sank back. He jerked his chin, as if he wanted to tell me something. I dropped on my knees and bent my head low.

"Tell Nancy her mother is very beautiful and looks even younger. Tell her——"

But if the sentence was finished I did not catch it, I heard the death-rattle, and was still on my knees when rough hands grabbed me and pulled me backward. I was conscious of white men and red men standing about me and glaring down on me.

"It's him! Come in from a scout with the Iroquois chasing him!" denounced a white Indian.

"Chop his face off! Slice him up! Show our red friends some white tricks!" cried another.

A swirling commotion broke up the close formation of the group, and Joseph Brant was sternly saying:

"This man is a prisoner. A Mohawk's prisoner."

The men fell back. Brant's gaze rested on the figure of Mr. Martin. The Mohawk chief yanked me to my feet and told a few of his warriors:

"Stand by this man. He belongs to Thayendanegea."

As the Mohawks, six of them, closed around me, their leader advanced to the cabin and stared down at Mr. Martin, then glanced at the three dead white men.

"You can see what that old rat did to our men," cried out a Tory volunteer.

"I see a chief has fallen," slowly said Brant. "I see a very great chief has gone on after other brave men. Had he lived we would put *goragh* on his name. Let two men of my clan take him into the house. Let them stay with him till I come."

Two of my guards, men of the Bear clan, picked up the slight figure and carried it into the cabin. The firing on the fort continued heavy and the response was spirited. Every now and then the rumble of the cannon shook a path through the rain and smoke. Indians and white men, who had been hunting down men, women and children in the woods were streaming back, dancing grotesquely and displaying scalps. Some of these were pathetically small. Brant had disappeared in the direction of the fort. Several savages ran into the street, carrying feather-beds. They began ripping these open and throwing the feathers into the air. Two of my four guards gave a whoop of delight and ran to join in the sport. Some fifty Tories, mostly Royal Greens, ran up, and I recognized their leader to be Walter Butler, always of detestable memory.

He saw me with my arms tied at the elbows, and led his men to me, and pushed back my two guards.

"What's this?" he cried. "A strapping prisoner."

Brant had followed the Rangers back to the cabin, perhaps fearing mischief. Now he forced himself through the group until he faced Butler, and informed him:

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"He is Thayendanegea's prisoner. If Captain Butler wants a prisoner let him take one, instead of killing them all."

"By ——, Brant! If I turn my Senecas loose you'll be minus a prisoner," Butler passionately warned, his face showing green in the weird light. Even the dullest of the Tories could see there was bad blood between the two men. Butler added, "I'm in command here."

Brant stared at him malevolently and slowly replied:

"The white is in command in attacking a white town. The white man has killed Robert Wells and all his family except the boy at school in Albany. Thayendanegea has seen their bodies: Robert Wells, the friend of William Johnson and of your father, Colonel John Butler; Robert Wells' mother and wife, his brother and sister, and his daughter Jane, and three servants. I ran to save that family, but was too late. The red man did not dream the white man would kill the old friend of his father. Your Sergeant Newberry killed the little Mitchell girl. I want it understood by Americans and British officers that Walter Butler was in command when this village was taken."

"I haven't any time to hear any —— preaching. We're at war with rebels. The Wells family was killed by mistake." Turning to a British regular, he ordered: "Be getting the prisoners together. How many are there?"

"Forty at last count, Captain Butler."

"Start them off down the valley." He paused and stared after Brant who was making for the fort. Then he added, "Too many."

He made as if to go after Brant. The rain was increasing and the invaders were more slow with their gun-fire as it became necessary for them to protect their primings. The fort continued a lively discharge with muskets and cannon. Brant had sensed the importance of a leader's presence before the fort. Butler changed his mind and turned back and stared at me intently. My two Mohawk guards, for the other two had not returned, were uneasy. I was shaking with horror at what Brant had said about the Wells and Mitchell murders. And I knew there were many such terrible acts I was to learn about later.

Butler thrust his face close to mine and with a ghastly grin taunted—

"Losing your courage now it's got down to business?"

"You cowardly cur! Wait till Sir John, your father, hears how you treated his and Sir William's friend."

"By ——! I may wait for that; but I'm fancying not to wait long before turning you over to the Senecas," he cried.

And the remembrance of his violent demeanor almost convinces me that those who said he went mad with blood lust were perhaps right.

"Don't wait for the Senecas! Let us have him!" loudly requested a white man.

My two Mohawk guards were stalwart men and could endeavor to obey orders. But they could easily be overpowered without being hurt. Butler sucked in his breath with a hissing noise and burst into a list of terrible threats. I would be skinned alive. Red-hot axes would be hung around my neck. The dread rites of Areskoi would be revived, with a man instead of a woman being the sacrifice. He had all the appearance of a madman, and concluded with mouthing words I could not understand.

The two Mohawks watched him nervously. Perhaps they believed he lost his mind, and their *orendas* were telling them he was not responsible for what he might do. The thick smoke swirled down on us and blotted him from view for a few seconds and set him to coughing. When he could speak, his voice was weak, as if he were physically very weary. In a barely audible tone he told me:

"You think you're safe, Whittlesey, because Brant claims you as a prisoner. But it's a long journey to Niagara and something may happen to you on the way. I verily believe something will happen to you. Nearly all our Indians are Senecas. They take orders from me. They're anxious to study the color of your blood. They have queer notions as to how a man should be taken apart."

His threats did not make me shiver, but his ignorement of a woman's shrill scream back of the Martin cabin, ending in a terrible *squawk*, was so utterly infernal that I shook like the leaves of the small poplar.

"You've murdered your father's old friend. Why should I expect you to be human to me?" I replied.

He tried to drive his fist into my face, but a guard shifted his position and blocked the blow. Senecas began coming up, and

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my two protectors stood with me between them. The Senecas saw Butler strike at me, and they owed no allegiance to Brant. Their eyes were live coals. They knew their inhuman leader wished me dead—after prolonged torture. They were victorious in Cherry Valley, the home of several survivors of the Oriskany fight where so many Seneca men died. Butler wheeled about and ran his wild gaze over their ferocious faces. Then in a loud voice he cried:

"I respect Joseph Brant's prisoners. They are thoroughly safe as far as I am concerned. I try to keep the Senecas under control, but they're slow to learn obedience. They are wayward children. They disobey me at times. They repent and feel sorry after the mischief is done. I regret Brant did not put you in the Martin cabin instead of leaving you out here in the open; but that is his business. Rangers! Follow your leader!"

And with a theatrical wave of his hand, as if leading a forlorn hope instead of speeding away to murder more women and children, he ran down the smoke-filled street, the white men following. And when he thus departed, he believed the Senecas would sweep the two Mohawks aside and butcher me with what painstaking care their scant leisure would permit. I was thoroughly of his belief.

The Senecas crowded closer, taking care not to touch either guard with weapon or empty hand. They used their shoulders. The Mohawks resisted the pressure, but used only their hands. Seneca and Mohawk were Elder Brothers. Neither intended to come to a death grapple over a white man. Even many of our Oneidas were lukewarm to give active aid to the Americans because they had married Onondaga women.

"Ho! ho! Elder brother of the Fifth Fire, what is in your trap?" cried a Seneca.

"This white man is Thayendanegea's prisoner," sullenly warned one of the guards, pushing the speaker back.

"I hear a Bear speaking. Theyendanegea is a Bear," said the warrior who had been repulsed. "This man—" and he tapped his own chest—"'He Stands Up,' is a Bear. Theyendanegea is his brother. He would not push me back if I wanted to look in his trap. If I was hungry I could eat what I found in his trap."

Another Seneca sought to mollify the Mohawks by calling out:

"You men of the Fifth Fire see a Wolf, a Bear, a Beaver and a Turtle standing before you, asking for what is in your trap. A strong man of the Bear tribe has spoken to you, saying he is hungry. We see a Wolf and a Bear beside the white man. Long before any white men came to the Long House the Wolf, the Bear, the Beaver and the Turtle always stood on the same side when playing games."

"Thayendanegea's heart will be black," warned the Mohawk of the Wolf clan. "But two men can not stand in the path before so many men."

A more impatient Seneca exclaimed—

"Meat for the men who follow Sayenqueraghta is in the trap."

"The meat is cold. Bring hot axes to hang upon it," urged another.

The Seneca of the Bear clan seriously continued:

"He Stands Up is Thayendanegea's brother. Let Thayendanegea speak to him if his heart is sore."

WITH a violent surge the Senecas pressed around me, shouldering the two Mohawks to the edge of the circle. The Senecas were remembering their losses at Oriskany and the cries of widowed women in the Genesee towns. And they had tasted much blood this drear morning. The fort cannon boomed, but all the artillery in America could not save me. He Stands Up clamped a heavy hand on my shoulder and threw back his head to sound the death-cry.

"Make a path for the granddaughter of a Sachem of the Great Hill People," shouted a shrill voice on the outskirts of the crowd. "A clear path for a daughter of the Wolf!"

And while the pack did not separate He Stands Up failed to sound the death-cry, and in the moment the monster's purpose was halted a slim, boyish figure shot up on the shoulders of the outer ring, and then Nancy Martin was literally pulling herself over the heads of my amazed tormentors and was forcing herself to the ground at my side.

Before a man could speak she was loudly proclaiming:

"I am Newataquaah. I am of the Nadawaono. My mother was of the Wolf tribe. Newataquaah is of the Wolf tribe. Are there any Wolf men here? Then they are my brothers."

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She paused for breath, and the amazement was still deep on the fierce faces when she renewed speaking, and added to their bewilderment by the startling assertion:

"This man you call prisoner is of the Wolf tribe. He was adopted by a Mohawk mother, a Wolf. He saved her son from drowning. Will a Wolf eat à Wolf? Never in the Long House. Stand back from this man, who is a Wolf, if you ever think to burn tobacco to Hawenneyu and ask that the ancient fire burn again at Onondaga."

The Senecas stared at her in silence, impressed by her words and resolute bearing, and her eloquence. The two Mohawks began working their way forward, stimulated to do their duty by her brave words.

He Stands Up was the first to recover his tongue, and he harshly said:

"This is a white man. He is a *Wastouronon.*"

His use of the Mohawk term for "Bostonian" brought grunts of rage, for it applied not only to the inhabitants of that city, but to all New England people, and even to the people of the thirteen colonies in general.

"His skin is white, but he has a Mohawk mother, a woman of the Wolf," she instantly replied. "What tribe does Walter Butler, with his white skin, belong to? He has no tribe. He is nothing. Will you take orders, like Delawares, from a white man who has no tribe and harm a white man who has a Mohawk mother?"

She was magnificent, but I expected the Mohawk guards to speak up and say my name had never been called at a council and that my adoption had never been perfected.

"Butler is a very great warrior," muttered He Stands Up.

"Then call him that. Here is his road-belt."

And her small hands fumbled at my neck and pulled into the view the string of white beads Butler had given her in Albany when she was a schoolgirl.

"It is very dark. We do not see good," complained the man of the Bear clan. "Butler will laugh and give us red cloth and rum when he hears this man has worn hot axes. Now the woman of the Wolf says he carries Butler's belt!"

"Does a Wolf lie?" she passionately demanded, thrusting her small face close to the Seneca's and drawing back her lips in a feline snarl.

One of the Mohawks cried out for silence, and I feared he was to betray me. My heart resumed its thumping when he proclaimed:

"We remember this man now. He saved a Mohawk boy from the river when the ice was floating. He was a very brave man that day. He was called son by the boy's mother, who is a Wolf. Newataquaah speaks with a straight tongue. The white man shall live for saving the Mohawk boy, or four men of the Fifth Fire will go with him. He is Thayendanegea's prisoner. He shall live for that, or four men from the Eastern Door shall die under the axes from the Western Door. He carries Butler's road-belt: The men from the First Fire shall say if he lives for that."

He called out shrilly and the two Mohawks in the Martin cabin emerged and plunged into the group. The guard concluded by warning:

"You see four men who follow Thayendanegea. They do not follow the man called Butler."

He sounded his signal again and the two Mohawks who had been emptying feather beds, came up on the run, their axes in their hands. When they saw no white enemies they put them back in their belts, but lost no time in working their way to my side. And also came Walter Butler, his grayish-green eyes aflame with passion.

"——!" he screamed in English. "You've had time enough to make his hide into shirts; and he still lives! We must be going. Are you saving him for your women?"

Some of the Senecas understood, but before any could attempt an explanation, Butler was forcing his way to my side, his hand on an ax. The girl confronted him and cried:

"This man is of the Wolf clan. He is Thayendanegea's prisoner. He carries your road-belt. For that he shall live!"

Butler was completely nonplused and could not have appeared to advantage in the searching gaze of his Senecas. He stared at Nancy Martin goggle-eyed, his mouth slack.

"Well, —— me!" he exploded in English. "The young Martin girl! Interfering with my prisoner!"

"With Thayendanegea's prisoner," she hotly corrected.

"With the prisoner of the Long House!" passionately cried Butler, now eager to

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recover any lost prestige. "We fight for the Great Chief over the water who whipped the French. The prisoner belongs to the Long House. The Big Chief says the men who hold the Western Door, after the Eastern Door is left open, shall do as they will with the white man."

"This woman is Newataquaah. Her mother was a Wolf," simply announced He Stands Up.

"She says the man has a Mohawk mother, who is a Wolf," added a second.

"Lies! It's a lie about his having a Mohawk mother. He fights against the Great Chief. The Mohawks fight against the Bostonians."

"Walter Butler, don't tell them again that I lie," whispered the girl; and her slim hand reached behind a Mohawk and pulled a tomahawk from his belt.

The guard gently took the ax from her hand and said—

"The Seneca woman speaks with a straight tongue."

Butler smiled as never before had I seen a man smile, white or red. In English he murmured:

"You little tree-cat! You'll be worth taming!"

I spoke, for the first time since the girl's arrival, and said—

"Hold her tight, you Senecas, or she will whip your leader."

A Mohawk stepped before me as Butler tried to tear my face with his bare fingers. He Stands Up reverted to the last of the three reasons why I should not be harmed, by informing Butler:

"This man wears wampum. Newataquaah says it is your road-belt."

And his rough fingers lifted the string of white beads into view.

"By ——! That's good! The wench has been philandering with my gift-beads!" exclaimed Butler.

They did not understand what he meant by "philandering," but they did catch his admission that the beads had been his. One of the guards from the Martin cabin, in excellent English, said:

"You say the beads were yours. This man wears them. You may kill a man who carries your belts; but not this man. Thayendanegea will tell when he is to die. Our brothers from the Western Door are missing many killings."

Then he repeated this in the Mohawk dialect, and the Senecas displayed eagerness to be back among the cabins.

Some one called out that Thayendanegea was coming. Butler cast me a baleful look and reminded me:

"It's a long road to Niagara. We'll see if the beads and Brant's few men can deliver you alive."

To the girl he said—

"You'd better be in your cabin where your father lies dead."

Then with a whoop to his red followers he dashed away.

"My father!" Nancy whispered, clawing at my arm. "Surely the Iroquois could not harm him! Surely not after Joseph Brant's promise!"

"He died a gallant gentleman. Those white beasts on the ground he sent on ahead. The Iroquois did not harm him. Joseph Brant called him 'chief' and added *goragh* to his name."

I could feel her slight form trembling as she pressed against me for a few moments. Then her mother's blood was asserting itself, and she was red long enough to straighten her slight figure and gravely tell the Mohawks:

"You are men. This white man with a Mohawk mother is a very brave man. Let no man harm him. Butler is a dog. You do not follow him. Stay here till I come back. I go to speak to my father."

"He shall have a new name when men of the Fifth Fire speak of him," one of the guards assured her. "He killed them all with his long, thin knife."

The girl walked steadily to the cabin and entered. Down the street was much commotion. There was the wailing of women and the cries of children, and my heart was sick unto death. An Onondaga came bounding along, shouting:

"*Yo-hah!* Bring the prisoners along. They have finished hunting in the woods for those who hid."

THE booming of the fort cannon told me the place was still holding out. Brant suddenly joined us, his face black with wrath.

"Whittlesey," he began, "I hear Butler has been here with some of his Senecas. I am glad to find you alive. Butler would not even let his own friends in this settlement have warning. He would not save them from being killed. Whenever you

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hear any one speak of cruelty in the red man, remember Walter Butler! Has Newataquaah come back?"

I nodded toward the cabin.

"I would have saved him," murmured Brant. "Yet he died well." And his gaze wandered to the dead Tories. "My *orenda* tells me Walter Butler will not be called 'chief,' nor 'great,' when he dies."

Could I have visioned the bloody lane of the next few years, and have foreseen Walter Butler's death at West Canada Creek, killed by an Oneida ax and his body left unburied like so much carrion, perhaps the cold of that drizzling November morning would not have been felt. But there was nothing that could lessen the agony of standing helpless and hearing the shrieks of some poor creature being hunted to death in the woods.

"Must they all be killed?" I muttered.

Brant, still watching the Martin door, reminded me:

"One of your race is in command here. He is teaching new tricks to the Long House. Sayenqueraghta says he is more bloodthirsty than the Senecas. But we shall be leaving as soon as we round up the live stock. My scouts say Colonel Klock is within four miles of here with three hundred men. He could have been here two days ago. I think he is waiting to make sure we have come and gone. So I do not fear Klock. But Colonel William Butler is a very brave man. If he comes from the Scoharie we will have a hard fight."

Nancy Martin slowly came from the cabin and joined us. Her small face looked ghastly and pinched like a starved child's.

"Thayendanegea, call your men and be going," she said.

"Captain Walter Butler is in command."

"You still command the Mohawks. Leave this poor, distressed place and be going. They have killed all they can get at. They are plundering now."

"I would have saved your father, Newataquaah, if I had known."

"My father is all right. He died gallantly. The neighbors will give him burial. I have written a message that some one will find."

"You are going away?" asked Brant.

"I go with the prisoners."

"No, no, Nancy," I remonstrated. "Go to the Mohawk. There's a house there you're welcome to."

"Why should I go to the Mohawk, or stay here?" she quietly asked. "My father is dead. The little boy is dead. There will be women and children among the prisoners, I fear. I go with you, Thayendanegea."

"You are a Seneca. It is for you to say where you will go in the Long House," he conceded.

And I knew it would be useless to attempt persuading her to remain behind.

With Brant walking on one side of me and Nancy Martin on the other we walked through the cold rain to the dismal woods. In my two years of fighting I had seen many dead men, and many men in the process of dying by violence. But such sights had been almost impersonal; for only the soldiers suffered, and fighting with its attending risks was our occupation. But never could there be more shocking sights than those we glimpsed in gaining the woods. A mother and her four children, horribly mangled, beside a burning cabin. Thirty-two of the settlers done to death most cruelly and sixteen of the soldiers. I saw Colonel Alden lying where he had fallen, scalped.

By the smoking ruins of the Mitchell cabin was the body of the little Mitchell girl. I must have groaned aloud; for Brant said:

"A white man killed her. The Indians killed many; especially the Senecas who led the attack. But no red man killed that child. There is the man now! Look! He killed her after her mother and sisters were killed in the cabin."

He pointed to a man running away from the direction of the fort, a red ax in one hand, a rifle in the other. And as the man ran he leaped high in the air and yelled like a fiend. Newberry!

"Joseph Brant, turn me loose to meet him with my bare hands and I'll take my chances with the Senecas," I begged.

Nor did I believe anything could ever hurt me again after the horrible sights produced by less than four hours of rapine in Cherry Valley.

"He is Walter Butler's man. You are my man to do with as I please."

Nancy Martin held one arm across her eyes and walked blindly. I was glad she did not see the ghastly sights I was seeing, although while apart from me, she must have witnessed the worst. I was glad she did not see aged Mr. Dunlop standing in the rain before his cabin, with Little Aaron,

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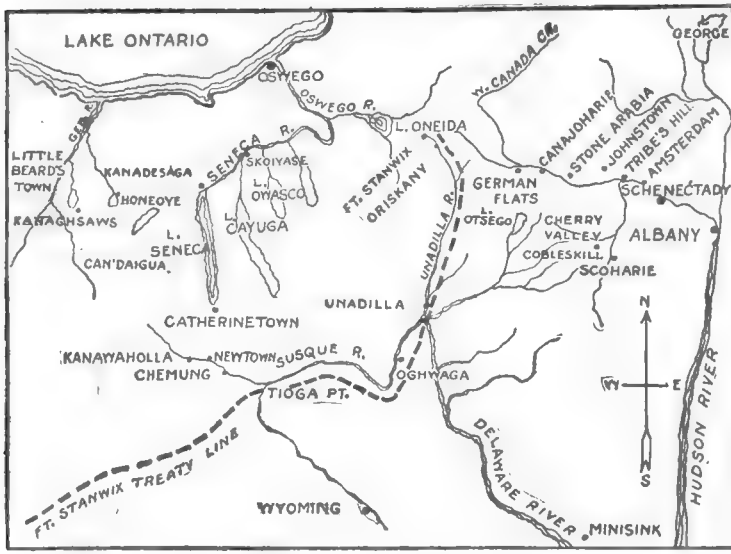

the Mohawk chief, at his side to keep him from being killed. We turned off toward the woods before reaching his cabin, but I saw an Indian snatch off his hat, and another tear off his wig. He looked near to death, from sorrow, fear and exposure. He had but another year to live: And the sights he saw at Cherry Valley that morning as surely killed him as if an ax had been driven into his head. Perhaps the good man would have suffered less had he died there while we were making for the dripping woods.

The fort cannon was still firing when we entered the growth and the bare wet branches whipped across my face and my feet slipped in the snow. But if physical hardships could impress on my mind enough to be remembered, then how vastly more must those unfortunate women, children and old men have suffered! There were about forty of us, many scantily clothed and without foot-coverings. I saw Mrs. Campbell and her children. Her husband happened to be away from the valley that day. A Mrs. Cannon, Mrs. Campbell's aged mother, walked with much difficulty. A Seneca glided up and tomahawked her. I saw Colonel Stacey and several other soldiers stripped naked and driven ahead of the rest of us prisoners.

Two miles below the settlement we went into camp with no resting-place but the wet ground, and no covering but the dripping sky. I secured from Brant the favor of shedding my long hunting-shirt and giving it to Mrs. Campbell, who was carrying an eighteen-months-old babe.

Canada and all else have faded in recollection, but Cherry Valley will always hurt. That the prisoners should survive that awful night speaks well for their physical hardihood; but morning found us an encumbrance. Walter Butler ordered that all but Mrs. Campbell and her children, and Mrs. Moore, should be liberated and told to return to the ruined settlement.

I pleaded in vain with Nancy Martin, but she would not go back. She believed she could save Mrs. Campbell's baby. As she finished her refusal she stared wide-eyed at a Seneca who wore a woman's cap on his head.

"Oh, this is too awful! Lord! Lord! Have mercy on us! At least help us to forget!" she gasped.

I afterwards learned the cap belonged to Jane Wells, murdered and mutilated. Well,

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outside of the white man's hell none could have suffered more than did those poor people. But let it be said that Joseph Brant endeavored to lessen some of the suffering. Let it be remembered that the climax of all cruelties was attained by Walter Butler, a white man. Let it be remembered that Brant could be magnanimous to an enemy who had proved himself to be a hero, and that he always spared the life of a former friend even when finding him on the opposite side of the fighting.

CHAPTER XLI

AIRESKOI GOES HUNGRY

ON OUR way to the mouth of the Charlotte, where rafts were made and canoes were collected, the Senecas looted every cabin they could reach. Being glutted with blood and Brant being able often to interfere, as only a cabin at a time was found, little if any harm was done beyond robbery. I saw no people killed, nor any fresh scalps brought in. The Senecas and Mohawks kept by themselves, and I tagged along at Brant's heels when he left his warriors to limit some piece of mischief or looting.

I was with him when he found the savages at the Sleeper cabin. Only Mrs. Sleeper, an aged woman, was there and her sturdy defiance of the Indians and her scathing speech gained her respect. I do not believe the Senecas would have harmed her even if Brant had not come along. But they found her little store of money, hidden in rags, and threw her feather bed out in the rain. Brant allowed me to restore the bed and tried to give her money. But she refused to be compensated, saying it would be taking money some other poor settler had lost. She was a very brave old woman. She could have gone to Cherry Valley, or to the Scoharie, but she had elected to remain and watch her humble property. This type is found on all frontiers.

On reaching the mouth of the Charlotte the prisoners were set to work making rafts. A man named Vroom was assigned to work with me. He was an honest fellow, but rather slow of wit. Brant came to the bank where I was fastening logs together and told me:

"Whittlesey, I should like to send you back to the Mohawk. But you are marked by Walter Butler, and if his Senecas caught you then you would be his prisoner, not mine. You must go along with us to Niagara."

"Nancy Martin should go back," I said.

"She's as free to go where she will as any Seneca. She refuses. I have talked with her. She is helping Mrs. Campbell with the baby. Who's the man working with you?"

"Vroom. Came to Cherry Valley a few months ago. His family lives near Amsterdam. He is a good man. His family needs him. He shouldn't be here."

"He could be worse off," muttered Brant, with a side-glance at a Seneca camp-fire.

After a bit he went over to Vroom and told him:

"You go up the river and look for canoe-birch. Go until you find some. Start now. If you meet any Senecas tell them you are my prisoner. You talk only English. Here; take my ax. It will be your road-belt."

I was glad for Vroom. His release was one of Joseph Brant's several acts of kindness since we left the ruined settlement and while we waited for the Senecas and Tories to finish looting the isolated cabins. Vroom's departure doubled my work but I welcomed the additional labor.

A day later, while I was still making rafts and Brant was inspecting the work, who should appear but Vroom. It is seldom an Iroquois betrays his feelings by any facial expression; but on beholding Vroom, unattended, surprize, then exasperation showed in the chief's stern face.

"Have you found canoe-birch?" harshly demanded Brant as Vroom came up to him and returned the ax.

"Couldn't find any," innocently explained Vroom.

"I told you to keep traveling until you found some. Why are you back?"

"I went till I struck country I knew didn't have any. So, of course, I came back."*

"Go to work," was the terse command; and in disgust Brant turned and left us.

I upbraided the fellow for being stupid, and asked him why he did not take advantage of his liberty to rejoin his family on the Mohawk. He replied:

"Mr. Brant has been kind to me. He trusted me. Of course I had to come back."

And I had not the heart to tell it was all

*A fact. Halsey's "Old New York Frontier."

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a ruse to release him from captivity. But his honesty cost him nothing, and he was not long to be separated from his family. After that Brant treated him with much consideration and more than once told me:

"Vroom is a good man. An Iroquois will take his word any time. Even the Senecas respect him. They know he kept the faith as he understood it."

I saw but little of the women as they marched with the Senecas ahead, and camped apart from the army. The Mohawks brought up the rear with the white Indians and Rangers between the two bodies. As we were embarking in canoes and on rafts for Tioga Point I was astounded to behold Tall Rock, the Oneida, emerge from the woods and join the Mohawks.

He saw me as he took his place at a kettle and hungrily ate of what meat was left, but there was no recognition in his gaze. Finishing the meat, he took the kettle and leaped aboard our raft. The Mohawks showed no surprize at his appearance and welcomed him as if he always had been one of them. Brant seemed to accept him at face value. He condemned the "Bostonians" for fools, and declared he could never hold to a chain of friendship with a people who did not know how to defend their homes.

Even if they were familiar with his activity in behalf of the Americans, they would not consider it a bar to his digging up a red hatchet in behalf of the great chief over the water. In language he was closely related to the Fifth Fire. Among the Onondagas he would be welcome because of the many intermarriages between the two nations. So long as his victims were white men, the Iroquois were not much concerned whether he had taken Tory or American scalps. He gave no heed to me as we worked our way down the river through the drift of logs and the anchored snags.

The journey to the Point was most wearing. Rain or snow accompanied us much of the way. I missed my long hunting-shirt, and found I must work hard to keep my blood warm. How the Campbell baby survived the trip is beyond my understanding, unless it be that day and night either the mother or Nancy Martin kept tender watch over the small bundle.

At Tioga Point physical conditions were improved. Shortly after we landed Joseph Brant tossed my hunting-shirt into my lap as I crouched before a fire. At first I feared the baby had died. Then I saw Mrs. Campbell wearing a new blanket.

After the river-travel under the heavy skies the return of the sun was most welcome. While meat was cooking in the prisoners' kettle, I walked down to the bank where Tall Rock was holding his powder-horn up to catch the heat of the sun's rays and dry the powder. Looking into the sluggish current, I remarked—

"They say a man of the Rock People has changed his heart."

"They say it with crooked tongues," he answered. "A white Seneca woman danced for a dead Oneida woman. Some one must be near to help her."

I felt ashamed for having doubted him. He finished drying the powder and returned to the Mohawk fires. I left the river and wandered up the point a short distance. The land was very level and appeared to continue the same up the Chemung River. Large rich meadows bordered the Chemung and could furnish pasturage for much stock.

In the lowlands was much oak and nut, while the high ground was covered with pine. With the exception of a few brush shelters, thrown up by the Wyoming raiders, there were no houses at the Point. Once it had been the site of a very important Indian settlement, and was the gateway through which came red men, returning from the hunt, war-path or to trade, and white men, to trade, to secure land and to Christianize the savages. Its importance in ancient days was testified to by the hundred Indian graves near our camp.

On the second day of our stay at the Point some Senecas returned from a scouting trip to the north and brought with them a white man's scalp. I pitied the poor —— until the Indians displayed a pair of leggings he had made out of some Indian's skin. Some white men had nothing new to learn in knife-cunning from the Iroquois.

Six miles above the Point and on the south side of the Chemung was Queen Esther's village. I was afraid that this Montour woman would visit the camp and either incite the Senecas to massacre the prisoners, or enter upon the gruesome task herself. When she killed the ring of men around the rock at Wyoming she well earned the title of "The Fiend of Wyoming."

Walter Butler and some Senecas went up

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the Chemung. Tall Rock found an opportunity to tell me Butler had gone to call on Queen Esther and was expected to bring her back with him. That Brant believed her coming might mean bloody work was suggested by his stern order that his prisoners keep close to the central Mohawk fire. When Butler returned and word was passed that the Montour woman was absent from her home on a visit to Kanawahola, farther up the river, Brant's order was modified and we were allowed much liberty.

SINCE our departure from Cherry Valley, Butler had not come near except by accident. He did not once appear to see me, and I took care to keep within sight of the Mohawks. Only once while at the Point did I manage to speak with Nancy Martin, and then but for a few moments. She said she was free to go and come like any Seneca woman. Her face was worn with mental suffering, but her spirit was indomitable.

"We'll get you out of this, Big Brother of the Wolf," she assured me. "Brant will befriend you. He liked your uncle. He likes you."

"I won't go back till you're ready to return even if I have the chance."

"That's very cruel," she rebuked. "But Seneca women mustn't talk even with Seneca men, let alone white men."

And she hurried off to find Mrs. Campbell and the baby.

The next stage of our journey was fourteen miles up the Chemung to a town of that name. The women were taken in canoe, while the rest of us made it afoot.

This Seneca village had forty good houses and was surrounded by large fields in which were raised much corn, many bushels of potatoes and large quantities of squash, cucumbers and watermelons. No longer was there any tarrying. Tall Rock said scouts had brought in word that we were to be pursued and that Colonel William Butler from the Scoharie forts was following us with his riflemen. Whether it was this fear, or the Indians' desire to reach the Seneca Lake and Genesee River towns and celebrate their victory, I could not decide. I know we had no resting-spells except at night. When I ventured to question Brant as to our haste, he briefly replied it was time for the Mohawks to be in Winter quarters at Niagara.

We halted at Chemung only long enough to cook and eat some deer meat, then we were off again for six more leg-aching miles to Newtown, a Seneca village of twenty houses on the right bank of the river. Tall Rock had told me that Butler planned to keep on up the river to Kanawaholla where we would meet Queen Esther, and I was filled with the gloomiest of forebodings. I believed the Senecas would stop at that village long enough to have a terrible night of burning and torturing.

We camped late at Newtown and were up early in the morning. To my great relief Brant announced he was to take his men and prisoners north to Catherine's Town without visiting Kanawaholla. Butler's visage was dark and gloomy as he rode by on horseback with his fierce pack trailing at his heels. The Mohawks did not start until the Senecas and Tories had a lead of a mile. But while Butler rode, his women prisoners were forced to walk, and only a dastard could have insisted that women should endure the hardships of a slippery, treacherous trail, with nine of the thirteen miles passing through a hemlock swamp. Fortunately the day was clear, if cold, and we did not have rain or snow to add to our misfortunes.

We came up with the Senecas in the swamp, the women having held them back. Butler was cursing the delay. Nancy Martin faced him and said—

"Get down and let us take turns riding the horse if you're in a hurry."

"You little tree-cat! Wait," he cried.

"I shall wait a long time before a man of your breed dares to offer harm to a Seneca woman," she replied in the Seneca dialect.

Butler knew he was gaining no ground with his red followers by uttering threats against one who was accepted as a Seneca woman, and with a grimace he clamped his lips together and glared about to find some victim for his rage. At that moment I had advanced and was offering to carry the Campbell child.

Butler spurred his horse between me and Mrs. Campbell and caught me in the ribs with the toe of his boot. At the same time a Seneca drew his ax and gestured for me to get back among the Mohawks. Butler laughed silently at me, doubtless hoping to incite me to some rashness that would win for me a cleft skull.

Controlling myself, I retreated. One of

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the white men close to Butler called after me:

"She ain't no Mohawk prisoner. She'll lug her own young 'un long's it's lugged. Keep close to Joe Brant or you'll have the top of your head shaved off."

The speaker was Newberry, and I groaned aloud as I took my place beside Vroom.

"You are sick?" asked a Mohawk in English.

"Sick at heart to see that white man walking behind Butler's horse," I replied. "My *orenda* tells me I shall not feel better until I see him hanging by the neck."

"Bad flesh. He and some of the other white men have shown the Great Hill People new ways of keeping a man alive while killing him. Butler's Indians are quick to learn."

"You have been to one of our schools?"

"At Stockbridge. In reading and writing and arithmetic I can do well," he proudly told me.

And he shaved with a white man's razor and carried a white man's scalp at his girdle.

It was night when we reached Catherine's Town. I was surprized to find the place was only thirty houses large and that the houses were poorly built. Seneca Creek divided the town and emptied into Seneca Lake four or five miles below. Orchards and cornfields surrounded the village, but I saw no large number of horses, as I had expected to find from all I had heard about this Montour woman's success in raising them.

I saw her in the morning when she visited the Senecas' camp. She was the daughter of French Margaret, and a granddaughter of Madame Montour. I had heard much of her refinement, and of her having been educated in our schools. But there was no evidence of refinement and culture in her appearance as she walked to the Senecas' cabins, a blanket over her shoulders and wearing a coarse slipshod gown.

She remained with the Senecas for nearly an hour and ate breakfast with them. On leaving, she was accompanied by Nancy Martin for part of the way and passed close to our fires, but did not stop to speak with Brant. I was ready when Miss Nancy came back. She approached me with a blanket hooding her bowed head and would not have seen me had I not spoken to her. She stopped and raised her head and I saw she had been weeping.

"I tried to get her to keep Mrs. Campbell and the baby here until I could ransom them," she told me. "She refused, saying Walter Butler would exchange them for the wife and family of Colonel John Butler. But she wanted me to stay here with her. Now I must dry my eyes, for a Seneca woman is very saving of her tears."

"Don't turn red, Nancy," I begged, so down in the mouth that nothing would have surprized me much.

"If I can get the women up to Montreal—anywhere out of the Seneca country—I will be all white all the rest of my life," she hurriedly told me.

Then replacing her blanket she went on to the house where the white women were staying.

As I was looking after her, Walter Butler rode up and quietly informed me—

"It's time you were lifting your thoughts above the flesh."

"Just what threat are you making?"

"I make no threats. I mention an inexorable agency called Death."

"Meaning Death dogs me?"

"It dogs all mortals. In your case it's at your side, man! It joggles your elbow. Its skull is close to your head."

"Death has been at my elbow for more than two years. For two years I have fought against *men*. When you've had the same schooling, you won't try to dodge Death."

"Whittlesey, you won't dodge the bony gentleman much longer. There're white men here who can show new games to my Senecas. They are anxious to demonstrate on that long rebel carcass of yours."

"You waste your time, Butler. Nothing can shock me after what I saw you do at Cherry Valley. And you're forgetting I'm Joseph Brant's prisoner."

INSTEAD of displaying anger, he laughed as if amused, and rode away to form the line of march. When I found Brant I told him of the threat. He gravely said:

"They'll not dare to take you away from my Mohawks. They are many and my men are few, but I've warned Butler I'll sink my ax in his head if he harms any of my prisoners. Old Sayenqueraghta knows how I feel and will try to hold his Senecas in control. But once we reach one of their big towns and you wander out of sight of a Mohawk fire, they'll skin you alive. Then

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they will tell me their young men did it, and are very sorry. But that won't put the flesh back on your bones, Whittlesey. Keep close to the fire. Once I get you to Niagara you will be all right.

"The British officers do not like Colonel John Butler. They say Sir Frederick Haldimand refused to see Colonel Butler after Wyoming. When Walter Butler reaches Niagara he will find he's in the same boat with his father. But I have many friends among the officers. Once there you can go on to Montreal and be exchanged. But keep close to my fire. The Fifth Fire of the Long House is a good fire to keep by."

We marched a dozen-odd miles, and would have found the traveling good if not for rain and flurries of snow. The Senecas were now treating the women kindly and providing them with bark shelters and good fires.

The second day out from Catherine's Town was through a fertile country and brought us to Kendaia, or Appletown. This was the best town we had seen. It contained some thirty houses, several of them being painted, and the location a half-mile back from the lake was most pleasing. The Indian graves here had grave-posts unusually well ornamented in colors, and the whole effect was something different from any I had witnessed in any Iroquois town.

We still marched and camped in two detachments. The Senecas led the way, followed by the rangers. The Mohawks brought up the rear. I had seen but little of Tall Rock since leaving Newtown as he was with the scouts in the rear, or hunting on the flanks for the kettles. I caught a glimpse of Nancy Martin when we stopped at night, but as the Indians camped some distance apart, I had no opportunity of talking with her.

Newberry marched with Butler's detachment, but at night he would venture near enough our fires to leer at me wolfishly. I knew Butler had set him on my track. I said nothing to Brant, but he had noticed the fellow's behavior, and surprized him one night by coming up behind him, and warning:

"When we see a wolf sneaking around our fires we kill him. Let the white man be careful he is not shot for a wolf."

After that Newberry kept his distance.

The country we were passing through had been little visited by white men and was entirely new to the prisoners. I was continually being amazed at the size of the fields under cultivation. The harvests were gathered, but as yet there had not fallen enough snow to hide the stubble. Now that we were deep in the Seneca country many of the warriors rode horses, and when we left Kendaia I was glad to see the women riding instead of walking. Twelve miles took us to the end of the lake, and two more in a westerly direction brought us to Kanadesaga, or Seneca Castle.

This village once must have been a very important town, for in addition to the sixty good houses, there was a chapel and a council-house. All the Iroquois forged forward as we advanced on the town, and the Senecas in the van began sounding the war-whoop. This was the signal for the people to pour out to meet us and form a procession behind the warriors. We prisoners, preceded by warriors carrying scalps tied to poles, were conducted into the town with much dancing and rejoicing, and were halted around the war-post.

A man, too old for the war-path, addressed Old Smoke, Brant and the other chiefs, and congratulated them on their return from a great victory. The wo of Cherry Valley afforded a rare holiday for Kanadesaga. After the speech of welcome a council was held. After the council was finished the Indians, freshly painted in black and white, danced around their fires until the meat was cooked.

Butler, nude to the waist and painted like his Senecas, entered into the dancing and prancing with ferocious spirit. Brant led his Mohawks, but none sounded the scalp-yell louder than did Tall Rock the Oneida. And as he danced he waved two scalps, and the onlookers cried out to each other that he was a brave man and a mighty warrior.

But I knew the hair he was parading came from the heads of the two men who joined in the chase that resulted in the Oneida woman's drowning, and whom Tall Rock killed at the Martin cabin and scalped behind it. The dancing and howling kept up until a late hour.

In the morning Mrs. Campbell and her baby were adopted by a Seneca woman who had lost a daughter. It was good to see the woman and little one immediately becoming objects of affectionate attention. Then word was passed that two men were to be selected for adoption. Men and women of the town began passing back and

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forth before the cabins occupied by the Senecas and their prisoners and by Brant's Mohawks and his prisoners. Several paused and looked me over, also Vroom. Brant advanced and announced—

"No prisoner of the Mohawks will be adopted by The Great Hill People."

This limited the choice to the Senecas' prisoners. Two men were led out for adoption. The gantlet, composed of women and grown lads, was so formed as to lead to the house of the prospective foster-parents. Each person in the two lines was armed with a strong whip. To listen to the jests tossed back and forth, and to notice casually the white teeth exposed in smiles, an onlooker might think it a rough but good natured initiation into the nation.

The first man taken to the head of the double line was stripped to the waist. He was a well-muscled, sturdy fellow and stood composed with his arms folded while the over-eager whip-wielders were forced back into place so as not to block the lane.

The signal was given and the man started, darting ahead so swiftly that he ran a dozen feet before a blow hit him. Then the welts began to appear on back and neck, and he changed his tactics and leaped from side to side and concluded by snatching a whip from a woman and finishing the distance with his right arm slashing at the savage line, his left arm held over his head to protect his eyes. He plunged through the doorway and at once became an Iroquois so far as immunity from danger was concerned.

More than one face along the right-hand line was red with a welt or bleeding from a vicious slash, and yet the crowd made merry and the recipients of the white man's blows did not appear to feel any resentment.

We prisoners gaped in astonishment as the second man was led out. He looked ill and dragged one foot heavily.

"Good ——! The man's a cripple!" exclaimed one of our number.

"It was planned," muttered Brant. "They must have blood. That is why they wanted one of my prisoners. He would not have reached the house."

"They would have selected me if Walter Butler had any voice in the matter," I said. "Yet I can run that line and reach a house."

"If they stuck to the whips," added Brant grimly. "It was planned the first man should get through. He is very strong, but they could have stopped him if they had wanted to. Some of the whip-handles are heavy with lead."

I did not want to look, and yet found I must. The lame man was led to the head of the line and a Seneca in English encouraged him:

"You run good. Whips no hurt very great. You run good."

And he patted him and smiled.

The word was given and the poor man started as rapidly as his lame leg would permit. For the first ten feet he was barely tapped with the whips. Then he was fairly smothered with blows and beaten to the ground. His tormentors desisted and he crawled to his feet. The whippers down the line began calling out:

"Pass him along! Let him come!"

But the lust to kill was too strong in those beside him, and he had taken but a few halting steps before the furies and imps were unmercifully belaboring him again. He went down and I believed he was dead, so quiet did he lie. The two lines were straightened out and every head was bent forward, the beady eyes watching him as a cat watches a mouse. He got up on his feet but must have been dazed, for he walked back toward the starting point. Like screaming wildcats the mob was upon him, their arms rising and falling rapidly. The prisoner tottered and swayed. A boy of twelve or fourteen thrust the stock of his whip between the unsteady legs and brought him to earth. This time he did not get up.

A hoarse command was shouted and the two lines reluctantly reformed. The same warrior who had told the victim to "run good," leaped into the lane and waved his tomahawk. Approaching he stood astride of the senseless form and shouted:

"Ho, this man has milk in his flesh. He will never make a hunter or a warrior. The women say he is too slow to sweep out a cabin. He is poor flesh."

And bending forward he swiftly sank the ax into the unfortunate's head, and a mighty shout of approval endorsed the ghastly deed. The celebration ended with the roasting and eating of a white dog. Such was our introduction to Kanadasega.

WE PRISONERS were glad to keep close to our house. The man who had run the gantlet came to visit us and said he was treated kindly and was free to do as he pleased so long as he did not

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stray from the village. Later on he would be permitted to go wherever he would, like any Seneca. But he did not understand the speech of the Senecas and was useless as a source of information.

He gave us some tobacco—poor adulterated stuff—and promised to come to us again. In the morning he repeated his visit and said his new father, who spoke fair English, had just promised him that if in the Spring he still desired to return to the settlements he would be provided with a guide, laden with gifts and be sent back to the frontier. He was much amused at the suggestion he would choose the red life, as well as by the promise of gifts and a safeguarded return home.

Brant spoke up and sternly said:

"The Seneca man who calls himself your father does not lie. He will do as he says when the grass comes back, if you tell him you want to go home."

As a matter of fact this man did not return to the settlements, but bided with the Senecas and took a Seneca wife.

Several days after the ceremony of adoption, Tall Rock came up as I was sitting outside the cabin in the frosty sunlight.

"Runners come from Niagara," he announced.

"What is in their bag of talk, man of the Rock People?"

"Thayendanegea and Butler and the white Indians are called to the English fort for a council."

"The rest of us?"

"The prisoners will stay here until another bag of talk comes, saying you are to be led to Niagara."

"No Iroquois go except Brant?"

"All the Mohawks but two and many of Butler's warriors go."

"Why do not we go with the others?" I insisted.

"Tall Rock only sees a piece of moss knocked from a stone in the trail, and the end of a broken branch. The light is gone after the sun and Tall Rock sees bad."

"He sees something," I urged.

"He sees, or dreams he sees, the soldiers at the fort holding a great council, and planning to turn their red helpers back to burn other towns of the Thirteen Fires."

"It is a foolish dream. Snow is in the air. The men of the Long House stay indoors when it snows."

He replied:

"Soldiers of the Big Chief over the water fight in the snow, and they say their helpers from the Long House can fight in snow. But the trail is very dark and filled with hard rocks, and Tall Rock sees bad."

All of which I took to mean that Brant and Butler and the most of their Indians were called to Niagara in a hurry, and had been told not to bother to bring along their prisoners. An important conference was to be held. Knowing this much—and perhaps more—the Oneida had shrewdly guessed the subject of a Winter campaign was to be discussed, so that the Cherry Valley success might be repeated throughout the Winter.

This, if true, was terrible news for the frontier, for when the deep snows came, men and women slept soundly. And I wished I was free and had an open trail to Tioga Point. Of any personal danger I had no fear. While I was trying to see clearly, where Tall Rock saw "bad," Joseph Brant came from between the irregularly placed houses and was at my side almost before I knew it.

He began in his deep voice:

"Whittlesey, Butler and his rangers and I are called to Niagara. We are to start at once and leave the prisoners here. You are my prisoner and will not be disturbed. I leave two of my men as guards; but you will not need them. You have a stout house and much wood and should be comfortable."

I thanked him. He interrupted his departure to indulge in a bit of grim humor. Nodding toward the phlegmatic Vroom he informed me:

"That man can find a good home here if he wants to be adopted. Four women and three men have told me they will take him if I will give him up, and will promise the whips shall be light sticks that break at the first blow. I told them he was given his freedom, but that he loved the Long House so much he returned to me and that I shall keep him. They believe he is a very wise man. He can go where he will while I am away. Whittlesey, if you could have the liberty he will enjoy, I am afraid I should not find you here when I come back."

"You will soon send him to the Mohawk and his family. I doubt if he could find his way alone. Why not send me with him as guide?" I boldly asked.

"No, Whittlesey," he harshly refused. "You fight too much to be on the other side of the Stanwix line. If his Majesty's officers

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in Canada wish to exchange you I will say 'yes.' Trading a fighting-man for a fighting-man is all right. But until you are taken to Canada you must stay here. Two guards can't stop you from running away, but remember the Senecas of this village will be watching you, hungry for you to try it. Once you are an escaped prisoner you no longer belong to Thayendanegea. That would be very bad for you. The ghost of your uncle would feel bad."

That day red men and white men started for Niagara, but I was glad that Tall Rock, the Oneida, was not with them. The remaining Senecas split up into small bands and went hunting.

The town was very quiet. So far as physical comforts went, we in bondage had no complaints to make. I was better housed and fed than at any time when in the army. There was an abundance of meat and vegetables, and all I missed was the white man's tobacco. Before Brant was twenty miles on his journey the two Mohawk guards were drunk; nor could Vroom and I discover how they came by the rum.

If not for Brant's warning and my desire to remain until assured the Martin girl was returning to civilization, I might have taken advantage of the Mohawks' helplessness and tried to escape. But the quickness with which they had secured rum suggested a secret gift; and behind the gift might be the desire to decoy me into attempting flight.

Nancy Martin came to our cabin and stood outside the door a few minutes each day and talked with me. She was a daughter of a Seneca Wolf and enjoyed all the rights any of the Seneca women behind her ever enjoyed. However, it would have been considered unseemly for a full-blooded woman of the Senecas to seek talk with a man. Even in the old peaceful days and during their festivals the men and women exchanged no words as would white people. There was none of the white man's companionship between the sexes. But the village seemed to understand that one brought up among white people would reflect something of the white environment, and what would not have been considered proper in a sachem's daughter was condoned in her. So we met and talked.

She no longer urged me to escape to the frontier. She heard with visible alarm of the Mohawk guards drinking. She told me that almost every day she walked by the ruins of the fort, built in the village in 1756 by order of Sir William Johnson, and exchanged a few words with Tall Rock. Later she informed me that at her request the Oneida had been scouting the woods, and had learned that day and night several Senecas were hiding along the Tioga path. We both believed these men were hoping I would try to escape. As for the rum, the supply appeared to be inexhaustible.

Nancy also told me the women prisoners were kindly treated and were doing well. It would be only a question of months before they would be returned to their people, she believed. Her estimate as to time was wrong concerning Mrs. Moore, who was not to be released until five years had passed. Several days after Brant's departure, Tall Rock returned from hunting and came to me and said:

"I smell a bear."

"You have dreamed of a bear and will shoot one," I prophesied.

"The Oneida has had no bear-dream," he corrected.

I kept silent; and after a pause he continued—

"Tall Rock smells a bear roasting."

I knew his way of speaking was meant to convey a warning. But when I pressed him for the literal meaning of his words, he simply said the light was gone after the sun and he saw bad.

ON THE next day I was surprized and a bit pleased to have some of the Senecas come and visit me. The Mohawk guards were sleeping off their overnight liquor and we sat outside the cabin, muffled in blankets, and smoked and told ghost stories. On departing, Little Deer, their leader, told me I had the freedom of the village, but must not wander into the forest.

"You might be shot for a bear," he gravely concluded.

So promptly did Tall Rock appear after my guests departed that I believed he had been hiding behind an adjacent cabin. He accepted a pipe and smoked a minute to Heno the Thunderer, and then announced—

"They say a bear-hunter has come to Kanadesaga."

It was useless to make a straight line out of his circle of talk. I waited, but his next words were not relevant to his first speech as I could see, for he remarked—

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"The smell of bear roasting is very strong."

"What is the bear-hunter called?"

He drew out his scalping-knife and with exasperating care sharpened it on a small stone taken from his paint bag. Then he answered:

"White men call him Newberry. He hurt his foot before reaching Niagara and comes back to mend it."

"I wish he had broken his neck," I muttered.

And yet I had no fear of Newberry. I had whipped him once and would whip him again with great pleasure if he gave me as much as a look. Walter Butler was not present to protect him if again he watched me with wolfish smile.

I dismissed the matter from my mind and set out to look at the village. The houses were not placed with any idea of regularity, but in much of the hit-or-miss sort of way the Indians plant their apple orchards. There were scarcely two houses in sight of each other that faced in the same direction. Because of this haphazard building it was easy for a stranger to become confused and to overestimate the population.

When I heard a baby crying I knew I was opposite Mrs. Campbell's cabin. Before I could reach the door Miss Nancy came out and stared at me earnestly.

"How is it you walk about like one of The Great Hill People?" were her first words.

"Some of the Seneca men called at my cabin, and Little Deer, speaking in the manner of a chief, gave me permission to walk as I would so long as I did not leave the village."

"You think they are beginning to treat you kindly?" she anxiously asked.

"Oh, much kinder. All their animosity seems to have vanished."

She closed her eyes and caught her underlip between her teeth. I suspected she was striving to suppress a shudder. Yet when she next looked up she was smiling:

"When you see Tall Rock the Oneida, tell him to come to me at once. I have a bag of talk to open."

"He may not wish to talk with a woman among the cabins. At the old fort it is different——"

"Yet he will talk to me and listen to my talk wherever I say," she interrupted. "I danced the Dance of Death for his wife. He is an Iroquois. He will never forget that. He will come here and hear my talk."

"I will give him your message. By the way, that fellow Newberry is back."

One hand went to her breast—never a red way of indicating or stifling a display of emotion.

"I'm sorry to hear it," she whispered.

I laughed.

"When that dog sees me coming he will scuttle to one side and give me all the path."

"Give you all the path that he may strike from behind," she muttered as if talking to herself. "I've been waiting, but I never thought of that."

"In —— mercy, Nancy, what's the matter with you? What do you mean?" I demanded.

"In —— great mercy it's all nonsense what I mean," she gravely answered. "There is something I must know at once: Has Old Smoke* gone through to Niagara. Find Oneida and tell him to come to me at once!"

She was concerning herself for my safety and I could not discover the need of additional protection. Joseph Brant was a big man in the eyes of the Seneca nation; and I was his prisoner. Some have proclaimed Brant to be the supreme military leader of all the Iroquois warring against the Americans. He was the military chief of the Mohawks and had no authority over any other nation except as some of its members might wish to join his warriors. I felt secure in knowing that Brant's fame and prestige shielded me.

In walking about in search of the Oneida, I met Newberry. The incident impressed me as being laughable, so great was his haste to draw away as far as possible, as if fearing my empty hands. And he kept his head down in a hangdog manner. My inclination to laugh at his cowardice vanished. I remembered the little Mitchell girl and was overwhelmed by an awful desire to get his throat between my fingers.

Halting, I started to turn and follow him when an imp of a boy of some twelve years of age popped out from behind a cabin and fired an arrow point-blank at me. The missile shaved close to my head, and in dodging to save an eye, I lost sight of Newberry for a moment. When I glanced around he had disappeared behind some cabin.

———

*So-called because he carried the brands and lighted the council fires.

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The boy was fitting another arrow to the string. The arrows were blunt, such as children use in knocking over small game, but the malice and lust to hurt revealed in his small visage was the heritage of centuries of cruelty.

"You young —— drop that arrow or I'll spank you," I warned.

I spoke in the Mohawk dialect, but he readily understood me, and hesitated. Eager eyes were peering from the nearby cabins, but no one called out for the youngster to desist. He was torn between the desire to shine in the estimation of the silent watchers, and the fear of being terribly disgraced by chastisement.

His juvenile dignity was saved by a stern voice calling out—

"Does the sachem of a mighty people shoot bird-arrows at Thayendanegea's prisoner?"

And Tall Rock made his appearance around a cabin.

"He is bad flesh," hissed the boy, running in a half-circle to retrieve his arrow. "Thayendanegea should not leave bad flesh in a village of the Great Hill People."

"You do not talk, nor act like one who is to be a sachem," admonished the Oneida.

My friend was careful to give no orders, nor make no threats. The boy fingered the arrow irresolutely for a few moments, then sullenly glided back to his cabin.

Tall Rock motioned me to follow him and led the way toward my cabin, and warned—

"Let my white brother keep away from that house."

"The Oneida is afraid the child will hurt me?" I asked.

"A very little child can start a very big fire. The men see him shoot bird-arrows at you. Their blood grows hot and some begin shooting war-arrows. The boy will be sachem after his grandfather, Sayenqueraghta, dies. His mother is the wife of Roland Montour."

"The brother of Catherine Montour."

"Some say the son, some say the brother. The Senecas say the brother."

"He needs to be whipped," I grumbled. "He'll grow up a beast."

"The white man, Newberry, was not whipped when a boy. No white men would be bad if they were whipped when young," he ironically remarked.

I remembered Miss Nancy's message and delivered it. The Oneida did not relish the meeting. That much was obvious from his change of expression. The cabins were always spying on every move made by a prisoner. He would be free to talk with her in a white village, but the etiquette of the Long House was more exacting. However, there never was a race more prompt to make the greatest sacrifices in the name of friendship than the Iroquois.

"Tall Rock will listen while Newataquaah opens her bag of talk."

"She will ask if Sayenqueraghta went through to Niagara," I said.

"He is in Niagara now. Tall Rock will say that. My white brother can take the words to her."

"No, man of the Rock People. There are other words in her bag of talk my ears have not heard. Go to her now as her heart is heavy."

We halted near my cabin and I was about to leave him and join Vroom, when he detained me by saying:

"The man Newberry came back to mend his foot. Tall Rock saw him walking and his foot was strong and quick. Tall Rock smells a bear roasting."

"Tall Rock has spoken of a bear before. What does he mean?"

"He had a dream. Let the white man tell him what it is."

"White men do not guess dreams. Go ask Newataquaah."

It often irritated me to fail in getting a direct answer from a red man.

"Newataquaah has had the same dream, my *orenda* tells me," was his enigmatic response.

And he left me thoroughly befuddled as to the meaning of the subtle by-play in his speech, and chagrined that Nancy Martin could talk with him in riddles and understand.

DURING my absence a Seneca woman had come to the cabin and left a pair of exquisitely beaded moccasins for me. Vroom was positive there was no mistake as by signs she had made him understand they were for the "tall" white man. One of the guards, quite sober by chance, settled all doubt by saying—

"They are for the white man Whittlesey.

The gift was very acceptable as my footgear was sadly worn and beyond the mending-point. Yet elaborately embroidered

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moccasins are not lavished on prisoners. Thinking the donor might be a woman who had lost a son and thought to buy me of Brant and adopt me, I asked Vroom to describe her appearance. She was a young woman; younger than I. That eliminated the only explanation I could think of.

I put the moccasins on and was pleased to find they fitted me nicely. I was still admiring them when several Senecas came up, headed by Little Deer, and presented me with two new blankets and a fine calumet. The pipe was a gift worthy of a chief's acceptance, for it was superior to the pipes made by the Iroquois. It was black and highly polished, and I decided it was marble. The stem and bowl were bored with an exactness seldom found in red pipes of my day. Certainly the Senecas were making none like it.

I assumed the pipe had been found in some ancient mound, like those that travelers describe as being north of the Ohio, and had been brought to the Genesee country. The Iroquois do not use the pipe as much for ceremonial purposes as do the more western Indians, and the gift had no significance beyond being an expression of good-will. An Iroquois' promise to do something must be talked into wampum to be binding.

We were very companionable after I had suitably returned thanks. I concealed all animosity I felt against these slayers of my Cherry Valley friends, and became genuinely interested in their talk on ghosts, demons and fabulous monsters. Now that Winter was setting in, such fearsome talk would take the place of hunting and war stories. I told them the Mohawk legends, which they knew better than any white man ever could, and sought comparison with the Seneca versions. They were practically the same.

Finally I asked Little Deer, the spokesman of the visitors, about the origin of the sacrifice to Aireskoi, the demon war-god. On this point I had received no enlightenment from my early Mohawk friends. For some time I had speculated on a possible connection between this evil spirit and Atotarho, the Onondaga, first raised as a sachem at the founding of the League. That great war-chief's talent as a leader in forays, his courage—which included cruelty—his reputation as a sorcerer, and his alleged cannibalistic tendencies, have resulted in tradition clothing him with preterhuman powers. But the Mohawks had aided me none in my endeavors to prove, or disprove, that Aireskoi was created out of the Atotarho myths.

Little Deer told me:

"It is a Mohawk spirit. Thayendanegea can tell our white friend what he asks. In the old days the Mohawks burned men and women and ate them, so Aireskoi would help them on the war-path. When Aireskoi was made glad he gave them many scalps."

"They burned men as well as women?" I asked; for I had thought differently.

"They burned men. When they had no men they burned women. When they had no women prisoners, and Aireskoi turned his face away from the Eastern Door, they burned bears. But that was a very long time ago and is put away among the old things."

After a bit of silence a warrior wearing the mark of the Bear Clan said:

"Let the white man run between the whips and turn into a Seneca. He is very strong and will be a great hunter and warrior. The whips will be little whips and he will not feel them. He is so quick and strong he will run to his new home and not be hurt."

I waited a minute, as if giving the proposition deep thought, then answered:

"It is good in the white man's ears. The whips would not hurt him. When he is adopted into a nation the two lines can be of warriors, and they can not stop him with whips from running to a house. But the white man is Thayendanegea's prisoner. The Mohawks say the white man already has a Mohawk mother and belongs to the Wolf clan."

Little Deer said:

"They said at Cherry Valley he is a Wolf. Walter Butler at Tioga said a Mohawk woman called him son. He is not a son, nor a Wolf, until his name is called at a council. They say his name was not called."

Wondering how Walter Butler knew my name had never been called, and that my adoption was uncompleted, I replied:

"Newataquaah knows he is a Wolf. Thayendanegea knows he is a Wolf."

Little Deer revealed his disbelief in my claims by asking—

"If the white man is not a Mohawk Wolf and Thayendanegea will sell him, will he take a father or a mother from The People of the Great Hill?"

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"His heart will be glad to do so," I lied.

"When Thayendanegea returns our white brother shall speak his words on wampum. He believes he is a Wolf of the Mohawks. His name had not been called. When the sun hides behind the trees Little Deer will give a feast and burn tobacco to Heno, the Thunderer. The white man shall have a mat and eat with us. His name shall be spoken as one who will take a new mother or father if Thayendanegea will sell him."

This was a high honor and I doubted if it would have been bestowed on me had the Senecas known how I shot one of their men at the beginning of the attack on Cherry Valley. And yet such knowledge might not have prejudiced me a particle in their esteem, but might have increased their desire to take me into the nation. I accepted the invitation in suitable figures of speech and, with a handshake all around, my visitors left me.

I told Vroom of the honor shown me, and assured him I would use my good offices with Brant to obtain his release, and my influence with the Senecas to secure road-belts through their territory to Tioga Point.

My companion was not enthusiastic. He was naturally slow and stolid, but his failure to thank me for my offer suggested jealousy at my being picked as Little Deer's guest. All he would say, and he mumbled it over his pipe-stem was—

"It's too —— sudden."

Dismissing his ambiguous speech, and doubting if he himself knew just what he meant, I strolled toward the women's cabin on the chance of speaking with Nancy Martin.

She was outside the door, as if waiting for some one, when I passed between the last two cabins. On beholding me she ran forward. Before I could speak she had noticed my new blanket and moccasins and had exclaimed aloud in surprize. Her brows went up in a question. I explained how I came by them and was disturbed to see her large eyes dilate and the small face take on an expression of worry.

"They invite me to a feast at Little Deer's cabin at sundown," I went on. "They speak as if it were given in my honor. They insist I am not a Wolf, and that Butler says my name was never called. So now they want to buy me from Brant and adopt me into the nation. Of course I pretended great joy at the chance of becoming a Seneca."

"I am of the blood," she murmured. "It's fierce, cruel blood; but no more so—no! not so fiendishly cruel as some white blood. The Iroquois men will fight for king and for Americans, but they do not like to kill each other. It was not so with Walter Butler's white Indians at Cherry Valley. I am not ashamed of my Seneca blood, Benajah. And I am proud of my Seneca mother. There, there, Benajah, no need to talk more like that. Let them say what they will about your name not being called. You are my Big Brother of the Wolf, and——" she came to a stop with a grimace of pain.

"What is it, Nancy?" I demanded. "You act frightened, as if you were seeing ghosts. Don't get morbid. Put aside your foolish fears. It's only a matter of a few months before we are back on the Mohawk. They give me presents. Why, Nancy, they've almost pampered me."

"Pampered you!" she whispered.

And her expression of horror was as unmistakable as it was inexplicable. Then with an effort she smoothed out her small features and was hurriedly saying:

"You must do something for me now. Go find the Oneida. He will be in front of a cabin near Roland Montour's house. Tell him Newataquaah sends him this little moccasin and that he must hide it at once."

"It's all so blind! It sounds so foolish, Nancy——"

She had plucked a child's moccasin from the bosom of her gown and was pressing it into my hand; and she fiercely interrupted:

"God give it be foolishness! Benajah, I shall never ask you to do anything so important as this. Do not fail me. Find Tall Rock at once. Then come back and tell me you have found him."

It was alarming to see her wrought up to such a high pitch of excitement and fear. Although completely puzzled I earnestly promised:

"Don't you fret your pretty head about anything, Little Sister. The Oneida shall have this moccasin inside of five minutes. I'm like a blind man sent to scout a strange country. I feel I'm surrounded with invisible people. It's like a topsy-turvy dream. But if Tall Rock is at the cabin——"

"He will be there! Go now. Come back at once."

She ran into the house.

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AND sure enough I found Tall Rock, squatting in the cold outside the cabin. I stood before him and fumbled in my shirt for the tiny moccasin. He rose and rested a hand on my arm and said—

"Newataquaah sends a present."

This proof of an understanding between him and the girl, an understanding she had not seen fit to share with me, irritated me.

"You're a great sorcerer to know that," I told him. Then in English, "It's all —— foolishness!"

"What the woman sends is a very strong medicine," he gravely said. "No eye shall see it pass from your hand to mine." And his hand found mine under the blanket and closed on the moccasin. "Newataquaah is waiting. Tell her Tall Rock smells bear roasting and goes to hide her present."

Disgruntled at all these little mysteries I started back to the girl and felt an arrow plump against the small of my back. I pretended not to notice it. I heard Tall Rock gently rebuking:

"Is that the way a sachem of the First Fire uses his bow? A great warrior does not shoot down another man's prisoner."

"He is bad flesh," shrilly cried the young Indian. I walked on slowly, thankful the arrow was blunt. As I passed between the cabins I heard the Oneida inviting:

"Come here and let a man show you how to pull a bow. You are old enough to shoot a war-arrow."

Regretting that the Oneida should teach the brat to use a mortal weapon, I moodily picked my way to Nancy's cabin and found her waiting for me, her eyes large and round and as dark as forest pools at dusk.

"I delivered your message and token," I reported. "And was shot in the back with an arrow——"

She exclaimed in fear. I hastened to calm her by adding:

"A blunt arrow shot by that young demon of a Montour boy. Seems to be in their blood to want to kill white folks."

She astounded me by crying—

"Oh, that is good!"

And her face lighted up in wonderful rejoicing. She was much agitated, and it was a fraction of a minute before she could compose herself. Then very quietly she told me:

"Now, Benajah, in some things I am wiser than you. I want you to promise that if I tell you to do something, no matter what it is, you will do it at once and believe it's all for the best."

"I do not like blind promises. If it means doing something that will help you——"

"It will help me! I shall never be happy again if you refuse. I am as free and safe in the Long House as Old Smoke or Red Jacket. But it will help me."

So I gave her my promise.

I returned to the cabin and slept for a while. When I woke up Vroom was smoking and staring at me with a puzzled expression on his simple face.

"I can't figger it out," I heard him mutter. "To —— sudden."

I jumped from the blankets and glanced out the small window. The sun was low. I brushed out my hair with my fingers and made myself as presentable as possible. I had barely finished when six Seneca men halted before the door and the leader called out:

"The feast is ready. Is the white man ready?"

"He is ready," I answered as I opened the door and stepped out.

Vroom stood in the doorway, still smoking and looking much perplexed. The Mohawk guards were snoring on the floor, having finished their rum.

As we walked among the cabins, never pursuing a straight course, men, women and children stared at us, and the grown-ups appeared to be much pleased. To the man by my side I said—

"Why are the hearts of The Great Hill People glad?"

"The talk has passed from cabin to cabin that a white man comes to live with us. Their hearts are glad."

While the lack of streets made it necessary to dodge in and out among the cabins, it did seem that we were taking a roundabout course in reaching Little Deer's house. At last we stood before his dwelling, stoutly built and easily made comfortable according to white notions had it possessed a chimney instead of a smoke-hole in the roof. I had seen no houses in the Seneca country, however, which compared favorably with the dwellings of the Mohawks, who had adopted many of the white man's ways of living.

One incident jarred on me as I was entering the house: Newberry was leaning against the corner of the building and

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laughing silently. Ever since his return to the village on the plea of a wrenched ankle—the man was as sound of limb as I—he had seemed peculiarly amused. Now he was laughing as if mightily amused: And whatever brought merriment to the heart of the little Mitchell girl's slayer was sure to be evil. I can not recall that I had entertained the slightest suspicion until the moment I saw Newberry leaning against the logs and noiselessly laughing.

"You dog!" I called out to him in English. "Remember you and I have something to settle."

Entirely changed in bearing he threw back his head and laughed aloud, and called out—

"Good-by, you poor fool."

I was musing over the possible significance of his words when I passed through the doorway. Then Little Deer was shaking my hand and ushering me to a mat before the fire in the middle of the room. Around the fire eight men seated themselves, and their eyes gleamed brightly in the flickering light. Little Deer tossed some tobacco leaves on the flames and muttered an invocation to Hawenneyu, but I did not catch his words. Several women filed in and deposited bowls of succotash, hominy and squash, and a platter of steaming meat before each of us, and quickly withdrew.

"It is bear meat. It smells good," I told my host.

He smiled and replied—

"Bear meat roasting is good to smell.

His speech brought to mind Tall Rock's puzzling words about smelling a bear. And I wondered if Newberry was still outside and laughing silently. And why should he say "good-by?" And why was I "fool?"

I furtively glanced at the faces through the smoke. My secret scrutiny told me nothing. If they meant harm why all this ceremony of preparing the excellent feast? Why present me with gifts? Yet I began to feel uneasy. Vroom was slow of thought, and yet I found myself brooding over his words to the effect it—the invitation to the feast, presumably—was "too —— sudden."

I was treated as an honored guest. No red punctillio did my host overlook. The tid-bits of the meat were placed on my platter. If I emptied a bowl of corn or squash, it was at once refilled. The men talked among themselves, but loud enough for me to overhear. They were telling how strong I was, what a hunter I was and what a help to the nation my marksmanship would be. But as they praised me I could not rid myself of two thoughts: Newberry's silent laughter and Vroom's bewildered declaration it was "too —— sudden."

My uneasy trend of thought—vague and to no point—was interrupted by a warrior suddenly thrusting his head in at the door and requesting Little Bear to step outside on a matter of importance. None of the men appeared to be curious at his going. It was more as if they had expected it. The healthy appetite I had brought with me was satisfied, yet I forced myself to eat to show I was at my ease.

When I could eat no more I rose and stepped to the small window and gazed out. A fire had been kindled near the cabin and a large number of men and women were gathered around it. A Seneca stepped to my side and looked out.

"They build a big fire," I remarked.

"The hunters have caught a bear. They will roast him," he explained. "Little Deer went to tell them how to do it."

I could see no bear in the cleared space around the fire and remarked as much.

"They will bring the bear in alive," the man explained.

Newberry now walked into the firelight. He was still laughing. I turned from the window and paced back and forth, waiting for my host to return so I might thank him for the feast. As I walked I held my hands clasped behind my back. Suddenly they were seized in an iron grasp and as I started to wheel about and wrest myself loose a cord cut into my wrists; and I was helpless. Then I knew why Newberry laughed. Thick-headed Vroom had been quicker of wit than I.

In Mohawk I demanded:

"What does this mean? How dare you lay a hand on Thayendanegea's prisoner?"

The man who had stood at my side by the window struck me in the face, and exulted:

"The bear will soon walk to the fire. He is sleepy and will lie down on his red bed. Aireskoi smells bear meat roasting."

I FELT weak and sick at this horrible discovery. I had been pampered and given gifts to add to my torture. The dread rites of Aireskoi were to be renewed, and I was the victim. And I was the poor fool, even as Newberry had told

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me. Tall Rock had suspected the truth when he said he "smelled bear meat roasting." Nancy Martin had guessed with terrible shrewdness once she learned I was being made much of. Even Vroom had wit enough to know something was wrong.

Newberry had been sent back by Butler to see that the foul work was accomplished. When Joseph Brant learned of the tragedy Walter Butler would disclaim all responsibility. It was for Brant, an Iroquois, to safeguard his prisoners when among the Iroquois. Even Little Deer had been called out so he could truthfully say I was seized and slaughtered during his absence. Doubtless he would express great regret and blame my murder on to wild young men who could not be controlled.

One of my captors struck me with the flat of an ax with sufficient force to make me see stars and confuse me for a bit.

Then I discovered I was outside the cabin. The savages were screaming in a frenzy of expectation. I was led through the divided mass toward the bed of coals, my "red" bed. An old man began chanting:

"O Aireskoi! We offer this flesh of a white bear that we may take many scalps when we go on a war-path."

Newberry approached with a skinning-knife in his hand and yelled—

"At last, Whittlesey, you'll pay for my broken jaw with every bone in your long body broken while you still live!"

I kicked him in the stomach and laid him on the ground. The Senecas did not intend to have the affair bungled and when Newberry crawled to his feet two men thrust him back. It was then, as I stood beside the red bed, with the heat drying the sweat on my face, that Nancy Martin came to me. She was dressed in her Seneca costume and was carrying a long rifle, horn and pouch. Her face was white but strangely composed. The warriors glared at her as she violated their red etiquette by leaving her place among the women. But none offered to bar her approach. The yelling ceased. Only Newberry moved, and he would have snatched the rifle from the girl, if she had not been quick in covering him and sending him running into the darkness.

"Shoot me, Nancy!" I whispered.

"Not yet," she muttered. Then in a high pitched voice she asked—

"Do my people roast a bear to the foul Aireskoi?"

"Let Newataquaah go back among the women," harshly commanded a warrior.

She haughtily told him—

"Newataquaah goes where she will in the Long House."

The man at my elbow answered her question by saying—

"We roast a white bear."

"Then the People of the Great Hill have had a bad dream. Some witch has whispered its meaning with a twisted tongue. Thayendanegea's prisoner will not be roasted in a Seneca town."

"Let the woman go back among the women," angrily repeated the warrior.

"Let the man who talks like a foolish man have a friend shake him by the head so he can think straight," she retorted. "Then let him ask at the cabins what has become of the Montour boy, who was to be your next sachem."

This speech caused savage to glare blankly at savage. Old Smoke, the sachem, was approaching the time when he would be done with lighting council-fires. His grandson, when of suitable age, would be raised in his stead. The girl continued:

"There are many witches flying over this village. They make my people blind. The Flying Heads are laughing at you. Let the men of the Great Hill People go to their cabins and dream of the Montour boy. Perhaps they will dream the words they will say to Old Smoke when he comes back from Niagara and is told his grandson is gone. Perhaps they will dream the boy will never come back if this white man is burned."

She paused, and this time excited queries crackled around the thick circle. Several men started off among the cabins. Roland Montour was at Niagara. His wife, the daughter of Old Smoke, remained in the village with her son. Talk dropped to whispers as there came the sound of loud wailing. The Montour woman entered the fire-light, her hair disheveled. I saw Little Deer for the first time since he had been called from the cabin. He worked his way through the crowd to where Nancy Martin stood and fiercely demanded:

"Let the woman speak with a straight tongue. Strange words come from her bag of talk."

"Let Little Deer go and talk to the Montour woman. She asks for her son," the girl replied.

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"Newataquaah has said the boy will not come back if this man is burned."

"She spoke with a straight tongue. Choose between stealing Thayendanegea's prisoner, and having the Montour boy come back. When Sayenqueraghta and Roland Montour come back from Niagara tell them the choice you made."

Little Deer was both excited and alarmed, although he endeavored to hide his feelings.

"Let the white man be taken to the cabin while we look for the boy," he ordered.

"Send blind men out. They will do as well as your best hunters," jeered the girl.

"When the sun comes back we shall find him."

"You will never find him by searching," she composedly answered. But standing close to her side, I noted her forehead was wet although the night was cold. "But take the white man into the cabin. You have very little time to search. Even the white man's life can not bring the boy back after the night gets much older."

Little Deer was greatly agitated. He talked aside with some of the older men.

"If they find him you must shoot me," I whispered.

"You shall not suffer," she managed to promise me.

Little Deer came to us and insisted:

"Let the woman shake more talk out of her bag. There are some words caught in the bag."

"Here are a few words you have not heard. Listen closely, for you will hear them this once. Give the white man this rifle, and a package of meat from Little Deer's cabin. Give him a road-belt to smooth his path so long as he is in the country of the Great Hill People. Take him to the Tioga path and let him start now. Let no one follow him. If this is done the boy sachem will be with his mother when the sun comes again."

The Montour woman was screaming, and incoherently declaring her husband would kill her, that her father would kill her, that the boy was out at play just before sunset and that some woods-demon had caught him.

"Give the man the gun and the meat and place his feet in the Tioga path," harshly ordered Little Deer.

And never have I seen such ferocious disappointment as that savage circle now lowered upon me. The girl, moving deliberately, gave me the good rifle, the bullet-pouch and powder-horn. Drawing my head down, she whispered:

"Don't follow the Tioga path. Newberry has stolen away already and is waiting to waylay you. Little Deer, when he talked aside, ordered some of the young men to lie in wait for you. Keep to the east along the river. Your belt will pass you through Skoiyase if you make it ahead of the runners."

"I'll not go," I told her. "They'll roast you once the boy returns."

"You gave me a promise—to do as I asked. I am in no danger, or I would leave with you. They would not harm me even if they knew I had Tall Rock steal the boy when he got the little moccasin, my signal. He's to keep the boy in the woods until sunrise; then he will follow after you. Oh, how I have prayed to God they would not search! For they could have found Tall Rock and the boy, I think. It was the one chance, Big Brother. The boy would not be harmed even had they refused. *That* couldn't have brought you back. They are bringing the road-belt. Start as if following the Tioga path, but swing north again."

"As you loved your father you know you will not be harmed?"

"As I loved him I *know* I shall be safe. Now I must examine the road-belt."

She took the string of wampum and ran it through her fingers. Two purple beads alternated with a white bead, the ceremonial color combination of the Seneca nation. She hung it about my neck and in a shrill voice for the benefit of the warriors said:

"No man dares harm you before morning." Then in a low tone: "They will hunt you once you get clear of the village. They will hope to capture or kill you and keep your death a secret until after the boy comes back. And, oh, Benajah, I shall not know how you fare!"

"The worst that can happen will be a clean death, fighting. I'll never forget what I owe to you, Little Sister of the Wolf."

"Yes, that is better; much better than to be fed to Aireskoi," she muttered. "But you'll get through. I know you will. I'll pray you will. Tell me I shall find you on the Mohawk when I go back."

"You will surely find me——"

"Wait! we're forgetting the food and they were hoping you would go without it. Ho! Some of you men there! Bring the meat.

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It'll be a long chase, Benajah, if they strike your trail. It will last until you clear the Eastern Door."

A package of bear-meat was brought and the girl took time to open it and make sure no trick was being played. Then she shook my hand limply and turned back to take her place among the women.

I started through the village; and no man followed me that I could see. I walked rapidly and carelessly, and I knew they would not dare to make their kill near the town. When I came to the Tioga path, running down along the east shore of the lake, I entered it, leaving a trail, but slipped aside after a short distance and made northeast to hit the great central trail that passes along the foot of the five lakes flowing into the Seneca River.

I traveled all that night, making good time once I had gained the ancient highway. I circled around Skoiyase, and beyond setting the dogs to barking raised no alarm. By the foot of Cayuga, Oswaco and Skeneatles I made my way without interference. I slept cold, as I had taken no blanket. I found a canoe half-way between Skeneatles and Onondaga Lakes and paddled down to the latter. Not once did I have occasion to use my road-belt. The country was nearly deserted, and the farther east I traveled the fewer became the chances of my being discovered. The small bands of Iroquois I met took me to be one of Butler's men and did not attempt to bother me. It was not until well on my way to Oneida Lake and practically out of the Indian country that my forest instinct told me I was being followed.

I had not seen, nor heard anything suspicious, and I was in the country of the friendly Oneidas; and yet I knew I was being pursued.

A grave affront had been given Aireskoi and the demon's avengers would be very brave and reckless. It was snowing when I left the trail and endeavored to move parallel to it. The snow sifted more thickly through the bleak forest crown and the footing grew very bad. I passed a bad night in a swamp. In the morning I began working back to the trail as the fresh snow would tell me if my pursuers had passed on and were ahead. About midday I gained the trail and eagerly examined it. A band of six Indians had passed that morning to the west. These would be Onondagas, returning from a visit to the Oneidas. No one had passed toward the east. I entered the path.

"Foot of a fox! *M'sieur* still lives!" exclaimed a startled voice.

And Peter Bolduc floundered from the growth on the north side of the trail.

I dropped my gun to seize his hands. He threw his arms about my neck.

"I heard something walk, *snip*, *snip*, in the woods, coming to the path. I tell myself it is a queer animal. I wait to behold his pelt. Behold! It is M'sieur Whittlesey we said was dead!" he babbled.

"I am chased," I panted. "I don't know how many. They were behind me yesterday. They have not come up. They must have followed me into the woods south of the trail. They will find my tracks."

He snatched up the rifles, muttering:

"None have passed this point. Who would chase you to the open Eastern Door? Some Oneidas returning from the Onondagas. *Psst!* Some one comes up through the woods on your trail, like a fox chasing a rabbit. ——! Hear him tumble along! Ah, that was a slippery root! Down the trail and tree yourself. We'll catch him between us!"

I could hear the man in the growth, as I ran around a bend and stepped behind a tree. Very soon after taking this position Bolduc was exclaiming:

"——! It is like one big family coming back together! Ho, M'sieur Whittlesey! But look!"

I ran back and saw Tall Rock, the Oneida, leaning wearily on his rifle. On beholding me, he faintly cried out:

"The white man has the feet of a wolf! Three times the sun has watched me chase him."

"Tall Rock, of the Rock People, your white brother thought he was smelling roasted bear," I explained, as I gave him my hand.

CHAPTER XIII

FORCING THE WESTERN DOOR

HAZELNUTS were ripening when I joined General Sullivan's army at Wyoming on a hot August day a little less than a year after my flight through the Long House. Wild pinks and tulips took advantage of the occasional openings to relieve the somber expanse of the

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far-stretching forests. Ducks crowded the islands of the Susquehanna and shattered the brooding quiet with their clamor.

During the Spring and Summer of that eventful year Brant had vainly worked to induce the Oneidas and Tuscaroras to participate in a raid down the Mohawk valley. I had left people, expecting and fearing a red visit, when I fared south to participate in what was to be, perhaps, the most pictorial and adventurous campaign of the whole war. Colonel Proctor's band was playing the sad strains of "Roslin Castle" when I entered the camp to put my name down as guide and scout. I found the officers grouped around the graves of eight victims slain the Summer before when Wyoming was sacked. The grave-board of one was smeared with the victim's own blood. Lines read in one of Mr. Martin's books, Young's, I think, came to my mind:

"Life's little stage is a small eminence,
Inch high above the grave, that home of man
where dwells the multitude."

But if my introduction to the army was marked by that mournful scene, I soon found cause for rejoicing when Lieutenant Tom Boyd discovered me. He was a sergeant in the Arnold expedition and we had been close friends throughout the Canada campaign. We sat up late that night, exchanging histories of the intervening years.

This expedition into the Long House was expected to be heavily beset with dangers. It was erroneously assumed that the Iroquois would receive very large reenforcements from Canada. We had no secure plan for maintaining connection with any base of supplies. The country was a strange land. With the exception of a few of us who had been held prisoners in the Indian villages there was no guide who could say where the various towns were located. The forest hid mysteries, and when we plunged through the green wall we bade farewell to civilization as thoroughly as if on ships dropping down the farthermost horizon.

Those influenced by sentiment more than by reason may criticize the wholesale destruction wrought by the army; but General Sullivan's orders were explicit on that point. The country was not to be "merely overrun, but destroyed." From the way we performed our task General Washington was given a new name by the Iroquois—"The Town Destroyer."

From Tioga Point onward I scouted ahead of the army. Chemung, where we had halted as prisoners only long enough to eat some meat, was destroyed. The inhabitants had fled before our approach. At Newtown, on the slope of a hill overlooking the fertile river-bottoms, the enemy gave battle. The Butlers, father and son, were there, one's name forever linked with the destruction of Wyoming, the other's forever to be associated with the atrocities of Cherry Valley. Sir John Johnson and Captain Donald McDonald were there.

Of course Joseph Brant and other Iroquois chiefs were present. Brant's valor that day was conspicuous, but the enemy were routed. Flung out on the flanks in deep woods, made more obscure by smoke, I saw but little of the actual fighting. I had hoped to glimpse Walter Butler and make him my compliments, but was disappointed.

Kanawaholla fell, emptied of its people before we came up. Then we turned north and burned Catherine's Town. Next came Kendaia—always associated in my mind with a bird-note, Kanadesaga—reminiscent of a war-cry—came next. It was deserted by the time we scouts stole among the cabins. We applied the torch, and, as in every instance, we destroyed all the growing crops, cutting down acres and acres of corn so that the Iroquois would be compelled to retire to Niagara for their Winter rations.

Throughout the Long House the people were rushing pell-mell through the Western Door. The Six Nations had received a taste of this sort of warfare early in the Spring when Colonel Van Schaick penetrated to the Onondaga towns and destroyed fifty houses south of Oneida Lake. After our victory at Newtown all women and children and aged men were hurried to gain the protection of the British cannon at Niagara.

Before Kanadesaga was well aflame, I showed Lieutenant Boyd Little Deer's cabin and the spot where the Senecas had planned to put me to bed. He joked about the savages' ideas on hospitality. Throughout the march I had hoped to learn from some captured Iroquois news of Nancy Martin. My heart was heavy from failure to secure any trace of the girl. Ever since my flight to the Mohawk I had expected some message from her, but the western forest had continued silent as to her fate. I had morbid spells, when, despite her assurances

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to the contrary, I feared her freeing of me had brought red vengeance down on her small head. I forced myself to hope, and yet I was afraid.

Detachments swung to the east from Kanadesaga and burned Skoiyase, where the dogs had barked at me in the night as I circled the town. Canadaigua went the way of its sister-towns. The guides were too few and too poorly informed. The army was a blind giant, groping with outstretched hands under the thick roof of the forest and occasionally finding a victim. Soon after a town was found a patch of flame showed redly, and billowing smoke rose into the heavens and warned the Iroquois that another ancient place was in ashes, and that much Summer's labor on the growing crops had been wasted. I remember Kanaghsaws, although it consisted of less than twenty houses, as it was the home of Captain Sunfish, a negro, and a very brave leader for the Iroquois. Neither he nor any of the inhabitants were at home when we called.

"We've destroyed more towns and property than ever before was laid waste on this continent," Lieutenant Boyd told me one night, after I returned from a scout with Tim Murphy, the famous Scoharie rifleman, and David Elerson. "But I'm going out and find a big village. One worth while."

"They average small. It's the crops that count," I reminded.

"We'll make a clean sweep to Niagara."

"At least we must keep on until we have torn the Western Door from its hinges," I said.

"——, Whittlesey! You've lived among the Indians so long that you talk after their fashion," he joked.

Then we talked of Quebec and St. John's Gate, and the pity of it that we had not known the gate was undefended, but unlocked and open. It was my last talk with Tom Boyd. Only the workings of chance prevented me from accompanying him, Murphy, Elerson and others when they went out on that scout at Gathtsewarohare to be trapped by Iroquois and Tories.

The enemy were desperate and making their last stand in the Long House. When the survivors of that desperate fight came up to our sentries along the base of the hill and close to a morass, I was standing guard over the men who were replacing the bridge Colonel Butler had destroyed. Not only did the Indians nearly overtake the scouts, but also came near to capturing five of our surveyors who were a mile and a half ahead of the army.

From the survivors we could piece the tragedy together. Boyd had started at night to learn exact information as to the location of the Great Seneca Castle. He had passed Butler's right flank without he or the enemy suspecting the other's presence. When beyond the enemy Boyd had pursued a small party of Indians, and Butler had heard the firing and had feared his position on the hill had been discovered, and that we were making a surprize attack. He hurried toward the firing, and Boyd and his companions were encircled before realizing their danger. Eight hundred Indians and Tories were ranged around twenty-five trapped Americans. Murphy and Elerson were among those who broke through the overwhelming cordon.

General Sullivan immediately ordered General Hand's brigade to cross the morass and push up the hill and dig the enemy out. Butler hastened back to the hill and found the forces there in confusion. So strong became the panic that they fled, leaving their baggage and personal effects. Thus did Tom Boyd's venture spoil Colonel Johnson's plans for a surprize assault upon our army.

After the hill was won I hunted up Elerson and questioned him. He said Boyd was fighting his bigness the last he saw of him. If not killed there could be no question as to his being captured. So I sorrowed that Boyd was captured, and could I have foreseen his fate I would have mourned that he had not gone down fighting.

As Butler's army of red and white men fell back we pushed on. We came to Little Bear's Town, the Great Seneca Castle, the Western Door of the Long House. We had hoped to kill or capture the chief, for he was widely known for his terrible cruelties. At Braddock's fight he captured two soldiers and burned them.

We found the town deserted; one hundred and twenty-eight good houses and a large store of provisions. We also found Sergeant Parker, who was with Boyd. His head was cut off, but his body was not mutilated. He had not been tortured. But the mutilated remains of poor Tom Boyd told another story. The ferocity with which the man was slowly done to death has never been surpassed in the annals of red torture.

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And Boyd would have been spared had not Joseph Brant been called away on some military duty, thereby affording Walter Butler a chance to turn the prisoners over to the Senecas. And such might have been my fate at Kanadasega if not for a savior in the small person of Nancy Martin.

WELL, there came the joyous day for the army when the order was given to march for home. But my thoughts were not ranging ahead, to the time when we would reach Tioga Point. My mind was ever behind me, seeking blindly through the dark forest for some trace of Horace Martin's daughter.

There remained much work for us of the border to do and much suffering for us to endure. We had destroyed the civilization of the Iroquois and we had increased their hate. Never again would their council-smokes rise in the valley, but they would return with scalping-knives and axes more than once. If Hawenneyu had wearied of their burning tobacco, he would be offered the smoke of burning homes. We may say the border war actually had its beginning at Oriskany, where gathered the Senecas after their white leaders had told them they should smoke their pipes and watch how the white men fought each other. We must believe that the fall of the Long House brought many terrible reprisals. With even greater ferocity than ever the infuriated savages, aided by the white Indians, scoured the Mohawk and Scoharie Valleys with ax and torch. A smoke by day and a ruddy reflection in the sky by night became familiar sights. The upper Susquehanna already was desolated and reverting to primeval conditions.

It was not until Sullivan's army left Tioga Point and I was free to make new plans that I learned how my old enemy Newberry died. He was hanged at Canajoharie for his murder of the little Mitchell girl at Cherry Valley even before Sullivan started the campaign from Tioga Point. I always have regretted I could not have been present when the noose went over his head.

It was also a pleasure later to hear of Donald McDonald's death; although I shall always hold that for a man who had thirty-two notches in his silver-trimmed tomahawk he passed out too easily. It seems he was wounded and captured while trying to capture a blockhouse at Shell's Bush, a few miles from Fort Dayton. John Shell, a German, shot him through the leg as he was striving to break down the door with a crow-bar. Shell dragged his prisoner inside and, after the siege was lifted, took him to Fort Dayton, where his wounded leg was amputated and he bled to death.

I never saw Tall Rock the Oneida again. But Peter Bolduc, whom I had not seen since the Iroquois' Winter campaign of 1780, told me he had been informed by an Onondaga that an Oneida died with unusual gallantry while giving battle single-handed to a band of Senecas. So bravely, and successfully for a while, did this man conduct himself, said Bolduc's informant, that whenever his name was repeated at a Seneca fire *goragh* would be added to it. Bolduc was convinced this man was Tall Rock. If so he finished as he would have wished.

It was the year following the destruction of the Long House that Sir John Johnson suddenly returned to the Mohawk and dug up his two barrels of silver at Johnson Hall, and packed it on the backs of forty soldiers to Canada.

Exchanged prisoners began filtering into the valley, but, although I eagerly found and questioned several, I could learn nothing about the Martin girl.

The Spring of 1781 found me much worn by hardships and unable to take the field until I had rested. I went back to the house that once had been my home and found its foundations. In just what raid it was burned I never knew. The Vischer place also had been burned. I walked across the fields and into the orchard back of the Martin place. The air was heavily perfumed with the aroma of apple blossoms. The house stood intact. Even the bench under the apple-tree, where the last of the macaronis had taken his ease while rehearsing his past grandeurs, was in its place.

I felt like a very old man as I slowly approached the house. Never again would the master keep me waiting until he was ready to go on parade. Where my youthful knuckles had apologetically asked admission were scars made by a tomahawk. But these did not result from a violent attempt to enter. In them I read Joseph Brant's sign for the place to be spared.

I returned to the ruins of my home and spent a day trying to decide whether I would rebuild that season, or wait until the

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war ended. I decided to wait. There was nothing to hold me, and so great was my sense of loneliness that I made myself believe I was fit for active service. So I said "good-by" to my uncle's grave, and then surrendered to a strong impulse to look once more on the Martin home. This time I found the door was open, and I went forward to learn whether the wind or a trespasser was to be blamed.

Nancy Martin, a bit thinner of face and deeply browned by outdoor life, suddenly appeared in the doorway. Without a word she ran to me.

"Lord, Nancy! I thought you were dead," I finally managed to say.

She patted my arm but it was a long minute before she spoke. Then she told me that twice she had started a written message to me; once from Niagara and once from Montreal. Receiving no reply, she thought I must be dead. We talked in an odd, jerky fashion for some time, each giving detached bits of experience.

"I'm going back to the fighting. I'm feeling stronger already," I said.

"I expected you would say that, Benajah. And I will stay here, and wait."

It was wonderful that unvoiced understanding.

"If I live I will come back," I replied. "It's fully understood my name was never called; that I do not belong to your clan."

"That is understood, Benajah," she softly admitted. "Never again shall I feel I am your Little Sister of the Wolf."

"Thank God if you never believe, nor feel that!" I earnestly retorted.

She laughed. The dimples came and went as I had not seen them since the first days of our acquaintance, when she tantalized me by shifting from one personality to another.

The war went on. It seemed incredible that there could ever come a time when the army would be informed that the fighting was ended and the men were free to go back to their homes. And it seemed vastly odd to be plowing the neglected fields and sowing the crops without a rifle close at hand, and without an eye on the neighboring woods. It seemed unreal to hear Nancy chiding me for rousing up in the night to listen to the wind, and to hear her telling me I need not sleep lightly for fear of an Indian attack.

When Joseph Brant paid us a visit one day I knew it was time I worked into new habits of thought and put the old troubles and sorrows behind me.

We had been smoking and talking on the bench under the apple-tree, when I was remembering something.

"Thayendanegea, there is something my wife will not confess to me. Years ago she asked me to guess a dream. Ever since has she refused to tell me what that dream was."

"That is all finished, Benajah," her high-pitched voice called from the doorway. "Let me hear no more about it."

Brant smiled gravely and mused:

"A dream she would not tell. Now you ask Newataquaah if she did not dream that some day you would be her man."

I turned to put the question and glimpsed her skirts disappearing through the doorway.

And the fate of the Iroquois! Long after that first visit Brant told me something: Something that made a profound impression on me. The Iroquois were left to shift for themselves and make the best bargain they might with the United States after the peace of 1783. Too many had suffered along the frontier to permit the granting of generous terms to the dismantled Long House. Too many wounds remained unhealed for the border to concede that the beaten nations had any rights.

It was President Washington who championed their cause, and who insisted they be treated humanely. I knew all this. But what was news to me was Brant's statement that the Six Nations had come to believe that the dead Washington had been received into the red man's heaven. This because he was the Iroquois' benefactor when their old allies had deserted them.

"We still call him The Town Destroyer," continued Brant. "Yet he is the only white man the Iroquois have found fit to live in their heaven."

What greater tribute can any people pay to a great and good man?

THE END

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GAUCHOS

by William R. Barbour

THE MAN on the street thinks of the gaucho of the Argentine pampas as the South American prototype of the cowboy of our own cattle country.

While broadly speaking his idea is correct, in the matter of details there are as many differences as similarities.

True they both worked with cattle. True they lived an equally picturesque life. True (and this is not commonly appreciated) the gaucho is as much a figure of the past as is the cowboy. Both were men of the "great open places;" both were hardy and self-reliant.

When one thinks of cowboys the mental picture includes hairy "chaps," six-shooters and the uncannily handy use of the same, high-heeled boots, the "chuck wagon," the home ranch-house, the cattle town where they took their pleasures, perhaps hostile Indians, silver-starred sheriffs, mesas, buttes, sage brush. The list of familiar stage properties is legion.

The gaucho never heard of chaparejos—he wore broad trousers which ended at his knees. If the country were brushy he tied a rawhide about him like an apron. He very likely never shot a six-gun, almost certainly never owned one. He could not have hit anything with it if he had owned one. When he fought, he fought to the death with a long knife, warding off thrusts with his poncho-wrapped left forearm.

As for boots, he usually went barefoot, strapping his spurs to his naked heels. Sometimes he skinned a colt's front legs like peeling off a stocking, sewed up the apertures where the encircling cuts had been made above the hoofs, and made himself *potro* boots.

His cattle-range was the treeless, absolutely flat expanse of the pampas, as empty of life as the ocean, swept by occasional fierce storms called *pamperos*, where almost literally he was born, lived and died in the saddle. In his habits of life he was more akin to the Cossack than the cowboy.

From boyhood to death his diet *carne y maté*—meat and herb tea—never varied, yet so well balanced that he lived to an incredible age. When he was hungry he killed a beef, haggled off a huge chunk with his knife, wrapped it in a piece of the hide and baked it in the ashes—*asado con cuero*—and ate pounds of it. Usually he ate only once in twenty-four hours.

His *yerba maté* counteracted the evil effects of a straight meat diet, it added mineral salts and laxative properties, it mildly stimulated him and gave him heart for the terrible monotony and hardship of his life.

It was made from the dried and powdered leaves of a shrubby form of holly growing in the jungles of eastern Paraguay. In taste it slightly resembled ordinary tea, but with an added bitter, medicinal tang. The light-green infusion ranged in stimulating effects between tea and coffee.

Most commonly he employed a gourd cup, pear-shaped, with the round opening at the smaller end. He carried his own particular *bombilla*, a hollow silver tube, often elaborately chased, terminating in a flattened perforated bulb. The tea was packed about the bulb in the gourd cup, boiling hot water was poured over it, and the guest of honor or visiting gaucho got first suck. The gourd was then refilled with water and passed to the next man, and so on about the circle till the tea had lost its strength. Wo to the man who refused; it was a blood insult.

The writer owns a well-worn gaucho lasso. It is seventy-two feet long—longer than American lassos—and was made from the hides of three steers, very cunningly braided and tapered so as to be a little heavier at the noose end. The *honda* is an iron ring. It was not designed to be tied to a saddle horn, but has a knot and loop for buttoning through a ring in the saddle behind the rider's right hip. Such lassos were never oiled nor greased, as it would make them too limp, but often the coil would be held inside the steaming belly cavity of a freshly slain steer to stiffen and preserve the rawhide.

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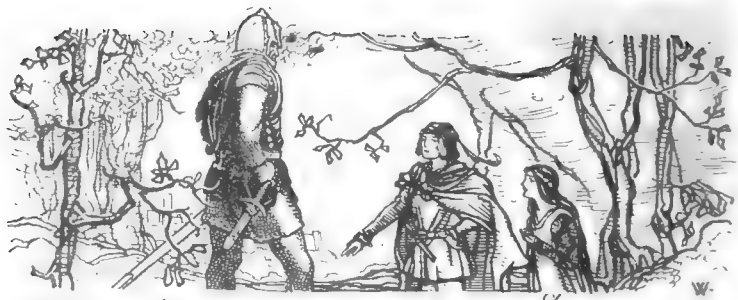

The BABES in the WOOD

by H. C. Bailey

Author of "The Man in the Cage," "The Wolf of the Mountain, etc."

SILVAIN was thriving. He had a breastplate engraved with gold; he had a spare horse—these things gifts of a grateful bride. And Thibaut his squire wore new breeches—these from the bridegroom. Thibaut and he sat by the stream and dined on a venison pasty.

A troop of horsemen clattered up. Their leader looked hard, and halted and said:

"My ——, you take your ease! Who are you?"

He was a short fellow, very wide, with a red hairless face and a shock of hair much the same red.

"A knight of France, sir, Silvain de St. Lo. Are you the lord of this land?"

"What if I am?"

"Peace be with you," said Silvain mildly. "It is good land. I pray you lend me enough to sit upon."

The man laughed. "You are a peaceful man. I know your fame, Sir Silvain."

"Alas, sir, I do not know yours."

The man dismounted. "I am Bernabo the Red, the captain of the Count of Novara."

"A proud office," said Silvain, "worthy of a good soldier."

He reached for the bottle of wine which stood cooling in the stream and passed it to Bernabo.

"Today to you, tomorrow to me." Bernabo drank. "By the holy rock, they need a soldier in Novara as things go now and Count Camillo is none," he chuckled. "A gentle lord, he. With that wolf El Moro master in Milan some one must keep watch. But a dog's life. Here am I in the saddle dawn till dusk, beating the marches while the cursed townsfolk grow fat and rich. No feast days for old Bernabo! What brings you to Novara, Sir Silvain, you man of peace?"

"Sir, I ride to win honor."

"Then you have come the wrong road. No honor for soldiers here. My lord the count, he is a dreamer, he has no head nor hand for arms. And the mayor and his greasy townsmen—they grumble that we live upon them, they bar their houses against us, they hate a man of the sword as the devil hates holy water." He laughed. "Fatted calves they are in Novara." He looked at Silvain and the little eyes in the broad red face twinkled. "And you ride to win honor! So did I once. That was a hundred years ago. Ride on, Sir Silvain."

"God send us both noble ventures, sir."

"Amen. So be it. I will go look for mine."

He swung on his horse and jingled away with his troop.

"There goes a happy man," said Thibaut. "He would think he was ill used if they made him emperor."

And they finished their pasty and their wine and in spite of Bernabo rode on toward Novara.

They had gone a mile or two, they were coming into groves of walnut and chestnut, when they saw men on horseback who seemed to want to climb trees. From one tree to another these men rode, peered up into the branches and went on to try again.

"What sport is this?" said Thibaut. "Are they hunting squirrels?"

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Silvain tossed back his fair hair and looked through the checkers of sunlight and shadow.

"They have hunted men," he said. "One lies stricken there."

Then he shouted:

"Who are you that come killing? Stand and answer for it."

He put on his helmet and galloped at them.

"Pity me," Thibaut groaned. "They be four, five, six!"

He halted, set his hand to his mouth and made a noise like a horn and shouted—

"Forward, lads, forward."

Whether this call to an imaginary troop deceived the men in the wood or the sight of Silvain charging in his steel was enough for them, they made off, scattering among the trees. Some way Silvain chased them, but they knew the woodland and he lost them soon.

Messire Thibaut, who had his led horse to manage, came on warily, looking all ways, and halted by the man on the ground.

"How is it with you?" he said.

The man grasped a broken sword, he wore no armor, his doublet was red with wounds, his face set in agony.

"You died hard, brother," Thibaut muttered. "God give you peace."

Silvain came back angry.

"Cowardly knaves, these," he cried, and put up his vizor and looked down at the dead man. "Here is foul work! This was no fight but a murder. He had no armor upon him and they were six."

Thibaut looked about him and shivered.

"Only six, lord?" he said.

"You saw the rogues."

"God knows what I saw. I thought I saw them setting their horses to go up trees. Pity me; am I mad, lord, or they?" He gave a scream. "Look, look! Did he ride three beasts, this dead man?"

In a glade hard by a horse was wandering and behind him two ponies all saddled and bridled.

Silvain looked at the ponies and looked up into the trees.

"You are safe now," he shouted. "The villains are gone. You are saved."

Thibaut rolled his eyes. "Pray for poor me! Who is saved, lord?"

"Those who rode the ponies, brother," Silvain said, and he dismounted and bent over the dead man and closed his frightened eyes and covered his face with a fern leaf. Then he walked to the ponies and slipped their bridles over his arm and looking up again into the trees he called—

"Come down, come down, and I will bring you safe home."

High up among the boughs the leaves rustled. White faces looked out. He saw a boy and a girl.

"Sir, who sent you? Who are you?" the boy called.

"I am a knight from France, sir, Silvain de St. Lo. I ride through the world to serve those who need. And so I am here to serve you."

"What have they done to my father?"

"Sir, I think your father is in heaven. But you have your life to live. Come down and I will bring you home and guard you faithfully."

Then the girl cried out—

"Sir, have those wicked men gone?"

"They have gone, lady. They are afraid," Silvain said. "Do not fear them."

The boy dropped from bough to bough helping his sister till they were close over Silvain's head and he caught them and swung them to the ground.

The boy was flushed and fierce at this indignity. "I thank you, I thank you. Let us be."

"Sir, I ask your pardon. I am to blame," said Silvain gravely. "Will it please you to mount and ride?"

The boy took the girl's pony from him, but she looked at Silvain and let him put her in the saddle.

"Wait, Barbara," the boy commanded. "Sir, where is my father?"

"His body lies there, sir. But he is with God."

The boy looked. The girl hid her face and sobbed.

Silvain took the dead man's horse, and Thibaut and he lifted the body and bound it on the saddle as they could.

"Hush, Barbara, hush," the boy whispered. "Oh, do not cry!" For he was crying, too.

Thibaut made strange grimaces. "Alas, the poor babes in the wood!" he groaned, and wiped his eyes on his sleeve.

The boy climbed on his pony. "Come, Barbara," he muttered. The two children rode away.

Silvain left the two led horses to Thibaut and came up beside the girl.

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"Where is your home, lady?" he said gently.

The little drawn face looked at him with fear.

"Sir, you will bring us to Novara." The boy tried to give his order like a man. My father is the Count of Novara."

Silvain made him a salute. "I shall do your will, my lord. I pray you, did you ride out alone with your father?"

"Yes, we rode alone. My father has many servants and soldiers, too. But it is better to ride alone. You can see the birds and the flowers. He often rides out with us."

"Oh, Gian!" the girl sobbed. "He will not ride any more."

"Who waits for you now in Novara, my lady?" said Silvain quickly.

She stared at him. She seemed not to understand. The boy stared, too.

"There are all the people in the castle," he answered. "There is my uncle."

Silvain heard a groan from behind.

"Fatherless, motherless," Thibaut mumbled. "God pity you."

"I will guard you," Silvain said. "And you will have many to love you."

The girl swayed in the saddle and he put an arm about her.

"Barbara!" the boy rebuked her, but she leaned into the strength of the arm. He drew himself up and rode gallantly, his face working beneath tears.

SO THEY came at last in sight of the grey walls of Novara. They were riding down by a wide stream that sparkled in swift music when they surprized a man, painting. He was at careful work putting flowers into the foreground of a picture of a woman and a shepherd. He did not see them till he heard their horses. He turned with a frown which passed into laughing amazement.

"Holy Venus!" he cried. "And who is the gallant knight that has won your fair body, my Barbara?"

"We have no heart to be merry, my lord," Silvain frowned. "I am Silvain de St. Lo. I have ill news for Novara."

"Uncle Stefano, my father is dead," the boy cried.

"Dead? Good angels guard you, Gian! What wicked chance is this?"

"We are bringing him. He is there on the horse."

Stefano ran to the body and saw the blood.

"Dead! He was killed by the sword. Camillo, my brother!" He turned upon Gian and cried. "Tell me, boy, who fought with him? How did he die?"

"We were in the wood. We were looking for birds' nests, and Barbara and I were up in the trees and my father was walking, telling us where to climb. And then men rode at him and killed him."

"What men were they?"

"I do not know. They rode at him and he fought. Oh, he fought bravely, uncle. But they beat him and he is dead."

"He fought against odds. His sword was broken before he died," Silvain said. "God send us all so good a death."

Stefano scowled at him. "And you, sir, you let him die."

"I came too late. He was down before I saw the fight. Then my squire and I charged upon these knaves, and they scattered and fled. So I bring his children safe."

"What men were they?"

"Alas, my lord, if you do not know your brother's enemies, how should I? They wore black armor, they would murder a naked man but they would not stand to fight; they knew that wood well enough and some were but lads. Judge who they might be. I cannot tell."

Stefano looked at him with suspicion.

"My brother had no enemies in his own land. But there are enemies abroad. This is a strange, dark story."

"There are those who suffer while we talk, sir," Silvain said coldly. "Ride on, my lord Gian."

Their sad procession moved away.

Stefano shouted to his servant, who was gaping and listening in the background, and his horse was brought him and he galloped on ahead.

When Silvain and the children came to the town, the gates stood open and a crowd was gathering in the streets. They rode by men who bared their heads but shook their fists at heaven, and women who wept and cried out curses and prayers. Gian went on and took the lead, saluting his people in the careful formality of a child, looking before him with wan, set face. But Barbara shrank into Silvain's arm and trembled.

At the gate of the castle Stefano was waiting and with him a big man, flushed and

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breathless, who wore a robe and chain of civic office askew. They made a solemn salute to the dead body and trumpets wailed as it came into the courtyard. There a troop of servants surrounded it to bear it away in state.

Stefano hurried to Silvain.

"Now, sir, come in. Let us hear all that you can tell."

"Let us care for the children first, my lord." Silvain dismounted and lifted Barbara down. "Where are your women, my lady?" She held his hand tight.

"The children saw it. We must hear them," said the man in the gown.

"Surely. Come, Gian." Stefano took the boy's arm and Barbara's. "Come, my dear, be brave."

"What, must we still be talking?" Silvain said.

"Sir, my brother's blood cries from the ground."

"And so we are to talk!" Silvain laughed.

"Here is our lord murdered," growled the man in the gown. "How was it, sir? That you shall tell us, by St. Antony."

They came into a council-chamber hung with scarlet and gold. Stefano took the place at the head of the table; the man in the gown sat on his right hand. It was Silvain who put Gian into a chair. Then he sat himself down and took Barbara on his knee.

"Now, my lord, who is this knight?" the man in the gown began.

"And who is your courteous friend, my lord?" said Silvain.

"Peace, peace, let me speak," Stefano cried. "This is the mayor of Novara, Sir Silvain. Sir Silvain is a French knight, Paolo."

Silvain bowed. The mayor grunted.

"You do not know me nor I you. Come, sir, how was my lord murdered?"

The door opened and there came in a man in a bishop's purple cassock.

"Stefano, my son," he cried, "is this true that they tell me? Your brother——"

He saw the children and stopped.

"My brother is murdered, my lord. We——"

The bishop held up his hand. He came to the children, he put his hands on their heads.

"Oh, my little ones, my little ones, God comfort your hearts," he said and blessed them.

And then he turned to Stefano. "What is this? Why do you trouble them?" he said.

"They saw the murder, my lord. We wait to hear how it was done. Speak out, Gian. Tell your tale."

So Gian told it all over again while the bishop covered his face with his hands.

Then Silvain struck in quickly: "As I rode on my way I saw these horsemen hunting in the trees and a man lying dead. I charged on them and they would not stand to meet me. They scattered and were gone. Then I rode back and found the children and brought them home. Now all is told. And for the love of God let these babes have done with it and rest."

The mayor turned to the child. "Is this true that he says, my lord Gian?"

"Of course it is true," Gian cried.

"Give thanks to God that he was there, Paolo," the bishop said sternly. "Sir Silvain, you have done like a gallant knight. It is by your work that these babes are saved."

"It was my good fortune I was there, my lord. And now they have borne enough I pray you trouble them no more."

"We have troubled them too much," said the bishop and looked at Stefano, and servants were called to take the little people away. But Barbara clung to Silvain and would not go till he promised that she should see him again.

"So you have come to stay in Novara," the mayor growled.

"I stay if the child has need of me."

"She will have need of men who are true and kind, Paolo," the bishop said gravely. "We have more enemies than we know."

"Who are your enemies? Who are the enemies of your lord Camillo?" Silvain cried. "I have asked that already," and he looked at Stefano.

"You ask!" the mayor cried. "By the holy rock, you are the only one who has seen them."

"Men in black armor. Men who had no stomach to fight. Men who knew your country well. Young men. That is all I can say of them. Judge who they might be."

"I thought that my Lord Camillo had no enemies in all the world," said the bishop sadly.

"Not in Novara, my lord," Stefano answered. "No, not one. But what of Milan? Lodovico El Moro is hungry for Novara and he is the very man for such a deed as this."

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"It is a far cry to Milan." The mayor looked sidewise at Stefano. "Is not the fronter watched, my lord? Where is Bernabo? By the holy rock, how is it we hear nothing of Bernabo and his guards? There are enough of them and, holy saints, they cost enough. And here is our lord murdered on his own land."

"Bernabo rode out on his patrol this morning," Stefano said. "He takes his orders from my brother, Paolo. How can I tell where he is?"

"Or where he was," the mayor growled. "Where was he when this murder was done? That is what we townsfolk shall ask, my lord."

"I met your captain Bernabo on the road at noon," Silvain said. "He was an hour's ride away from the wood. He went on to watch the frontier, so he said."

"So he said," the mayor sneered. "Who knows what he did? He was near enough. That we know."

Stefano cried out:

"For shame, Paolo. Bernabo is true as steel. I will not hear this."

"You will not hear it, my lord? You will have more to hear, I promise you."

"Peace, my son, peace," the bishop tried to check him.

"Here is no peace, I say. Our lord is murdered. And his brother tells us he had no enemies. Do you know what I ask? I ask if he had enemies in his own house!"

"Oh, be silent," the bishop cried. "You speak in the house of death."

"Aye, so I do. And for the dead man I speak. Do you know what they say in the town, my lord Stefano? They ask who is lord in Novara now? They ask who gains by your brother's murder."

"By all the saints, no man gains or shall gain," Stefano cried. "Gian is Count of Novara now and I will guard him and his with my life."

"If it is so, it is well," the mayor growled.

"You are answered, Paolo," the bishop said. "Oh, my son, pray for a mind that thinks no evil of men."

AND then Bernabo came blustering in. He set down his helmet on the table with a clatter, he flung himself into a chair, he mopped his bald red brow.

"Well, what do you know about it?" he said. "How the —— was it?"

The mayor laughed. "A good jest by St. Antony! The count is murdered and the captain of the count's guard comes to ask how it was done! Where were you, captain? Whree were your men?"

"Our good Paolo is pleased to think you had a hand in the murder, Bernabo," Stefano said.

Bernabo banged his hand on the table. Bernabo started to his feet, swearing.

"The fiend burn you," he roared. "You lie in your greasy throat. If he had ridden with me, he would be with us now. By the holy rock, I warned him it was folly, this fancy of his to ride out alone. Did I not, my lord Stefano?"

"I have heard you," Stefano said. "You warned him often the Milanese were dangerous."

"God help him, he knows it now," Bernabo cried. "I served him faithfully. That is nothing to boast of. He was a good master. Tell me, you dog, why should I betray him? He had me in honor and upheld me against you and your miserly town."

"You will not bully me, captain," the mayor growled. "I tell you this. You were near, you and your men, when my lord was murdered. The Frenchman saw you."

Bernabo turned furious on Silvain.

"You are in it, are you? What have you said of me?"

"I said I met you an hour's ride from the wood. I said that you rode on to the frontier. This also I say. It is not possible you or your men were near the wood when count Camillo was murdered."

"Fair witness, by heaven. I thank you. There is your answer, master mayor."

"I do not know your witness," the mayor said. "I know you."

"For shame, Paolo, for shame," the bishop cried. "Oh, my son, we are not here to think evil of each other, but to take council for fatherless children and this poor town."

"The town is well enough," the mayor growled, "and the town will guard its children."

"Guard nothing!" Bernabo swore at him. "Go mind your shop."

"Novara is my care," said Stefano with dignity. "I will maintain it against all enemies. Have no fear, Paolo. If the Milanese strike they will find us ready."

"A fig for the Milanese," quoth the mayor.

"Ready by the holy rock!" Bernabo laughed.

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"And eager for them." And Stefano smiled.

"Well—" the mayor looked from one to the other—"I will wait for them."

And he got on his feet to go and the others rose too.

"I pray you, have you done!" Silvain cried. "This is the strangest council ever I heard. Here is your lord murdered and you talk of anything but hunting the murderers."

"Burn my soul," quoth Bernabo, "what can we do? The knaves are fifty miles away by now. I never heard of the murder till I came into the town."

"To sit and talk about it," Silvain shrugged.

"Why, what can I do? I say. All my horses are weary and it grows dark."

The bishop sighed. "You are a soldier, Sir Silvain, and I am not. What would you have us do?"

"Why, my lord, scour the country with every man you can mount."

"And so we shall tomorrow," Stefano cried. "Be sure, sir, I will spare nothing to hunt them down."

"Oh, tomorrow and tomorrow," Silvain laughed.

"The devil defend me, what can we do in the dark?" Bernabo grumbled, looking at Stefano, and Stefano shook his head.

"Will you stay in Novara, Sir Silvain?" the bishop said anxiously.

"If you have need of me, my lord."

"I think my Lady Barbara asked you to stay. It may be that we are in danger. We have enemies whom we do not know. Stay, sir, and watch over these children."

"So be it, my lord," Silvain bowed.

"By the holy rock, I am captain of the guard of the Count of Novara," cried Bernabo. "I want no Frenchman to do my work."

"You will have work enough, my son. The town stands in danger if this blow comes from Milan."

The bishop turned to Stefano. "My lord the children are your treasure to guard, and here is a gallant knight God's hand has sent you. Let us give thanks in our need."

"Give thanks?" the mayor growled. "What was he sent for? To see the murder done!"

But Stefano turned to Silvain all smiles.

"Sir, you honor us. I am proud that Silvain de St. Lo should take service in Novara. And I confess my heart is lighter now that a knight of renown has the children in guard. For I shall have many cares and we must needs be often afield, Bernabo and I. Who knows what villainy is planned against us? Gian is the last hope of my house. The rogue in Milan who murdered his father has no mind the son should live. But you will not fail, I think."

"Sir, I will do my endeavor," Silvain said.

"Oh, if you have a mind to be nurse, give you joy," cried Bernabo.

THEN Silvain was taken to the children and found Barbara declining to go to bed till she had seen him. They lived in a tower of their own from which a passage in the wall led to the great chambers of state. Stefano offered Silvain lodging there beside his own, but Silvain chose a little room in the tower opening out of the children's where a servant was wont to sleep, and Stefano, protesting that all the castle was at his choice and the best lodging in it none too good, let him have his way.

To that little room Messire Thibaut came and elevated his nose.

"If this is for you, what rat's hole is there for me?" he complained.

"This is for both, brother."

"They call you to supper, lord. But you must not go. For if you swell, here is no room for you."

"I will go and you shall stay, brother," Silvain smiled. Thibaut groaned and his eyes goggled. "And when I have eaten, you may go eat. We keep watch and watch."

One of Thibaut's eyebrows went up to his hair, the other twisted down.

"They say in the castle the murderers were sent by the Duke of Milan," he said and grinned.

"I have heard it. I have heard many things, brother. I think I believe none."

Thibaut sucked his teeth. "The man who paints—the pretty lord Stefano—now his brother is dead, he has all in his hands. It is very fortunate for the lord Stefano."

"Oh brother, trust no one but believe nothing. Stefano and Bernabo, bishop and mayor, not one of them trusts another yet some of them must be honest and all may be. But who murdered the father left his work half-done."

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"What I do not believe is what everyone tells me," said Thibaut. "Those men in the wood were no foreigners. Milanese? Fie!"

"I have heard something too much of Milan," Silvain agreed. "Watch, brother, watch well."

In this temper they took charge of the children. But the task was not difficult. The servants indeed were frightened and excited by the murder of the count, and life in the castle did not run smoothly. But there seemed to be no guile in them. They were, said Messire Thibaut justly, like a yard of hens when a fox had snapped up their cock. They embarrassed Silvain by their worship of him. That a knight of fame and a knight who was young and good to look at should be the governor of the children delighted their fancy. They felt themselves living in the midst of wonderful dangers and made him their hero.

Stefano gave no reason for suspicion. He came to see the children every morning, he was busy all day with the affairs of the little state, mustering and training the town-guard, sending out companies to the frontier posts. He was perfectly the good regent. And day by day Bernabo rode out with his men-at-arms, scouring the country, seeking news of the murderers. He brought back only stories and guesses, but it seemed to Silvain that he was zealous in his quest. At least he and his company did only what honest men should do.

And the children—"It is not you who watch these babes, my lord," said Thibaut. "It is they who watch you."

There was no trouble to keep them in hand. Barbara gave her heart to Silvain, and Gian who was more silent, who had more pride, wanted always to be with him. They would not go to the falconry or the kennels, they would not feed the bears in the pit, they would not cross the courtyard unless he came too. There was no fear of their being caught alone.

So the days went by while the dead count lay in state in the castle chapel and the pomp of his funeral was made ready.

But Silvain was not at ease. The very quiet proved to his judgment that it was not from Milan the murderers came. If the Duke of Milan had ordered the murder, he would have marched to take Novara as soon as its count was dead. What reason for waiting till the town was ready to defend itself? Not in Milan, not anywhere abroad, but in Novara the murder was planned. There must be another blow to come.

One night after he had eaten supper with Stefano, as was their wont, and was going back to his tower he found a crowd in the dark courtyard, Bernabo's men and servants gossiping loud. There was laughing and horseplay. Silvain passed through the midst and those who saw him made way civilly enough. "It is Sir Silvain; fie, fie, it is Sir Silvain." But some were too merry to see or hear. He held a man off, another stumbled against him, the crowd swayed and jostled. He found himself on the edge of the bear-pit. A man tumbled upon him. He slid aside. There was a crash, a yell and scuffling in the gloom below.

"He is down, he is down," some one shouted. "The bears are on him."

"Who is down? Who is it?"

"The Frenchman, by my soul!" some one roared and some one laughed.

"Sir Silvain! Sir Silvain is fallen into the pit! Oh God, help us!"

The crowd surged and scattered.

"Not all of one mind, brothers?" Silvain said to himself, and then he shouted, "Bring lanterns and a ladder!" and moved as he spoke, drawing aloof.

His voice was not known or not known well enough for any one—save the man who had fallen into the pit—to be sure what had happened. There was much running to and fro. Silvain kept back against the wall, watching and listening. Lanterns came at last and he saw a cluster of Bernabo's men about the pit. Bernabo himself waddled out of the guard-room roaring:

"What the —— is all the din?" he cuffed a servant. "Why do you brawl here?"

"Sir Silvain has fallen into the bear-pit, captain."

"The —— he has! There is a fool's trick now. That was not what he came for. What a world, what a world!"

Bernabo waddled on toward the pit.

Some of the servants were on the edge with lanterns, but it was hard to make out what lay in the depths. A sound of growling and moaning came up from the dark mingled with the soft footfall of the prowling beasts. The servants had a ladder and were arguing who should go down, with eyes on Bernabo's men-at-arms. But those heroes showed no interest.

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"Where is he, my lads?" Bernabo said.

"There he lies in the corner. They have clawed him, captain."

"God rest his soul!" Bernabo cried. "Here is an end for a gallant knight."

Silvain stole up behind, Silvain clapped his hand on Bernabo's shoulder.

"Why, captain, you will not leave the poor lad to die there?" he said.

Bernabo turned heavily, gripped him, peered at him, made noises in his throat and said:

"God and his angels be praised, you are safe. Here is Sir Silvain, fools. Why did you say he had gone down?"

"Not the Frenchman?" the men spoke together. "Who was it then? Who has gone?" They began to number themselves. "Where is Giacomo?"

"What does it matter who he is?" Silvain cried. "You have to save him." But no man moved. "Why, if you dare not lead, then follow in the name of God!"

He ran to the ladder and snatched a lantern and began to climb down. Bernabo stood a moment, then swearing at his men, waddled after. The bears shrank away from the light, growling. Silvain sprang down and caught up the fallen man on his shoulder and made for the ladder again. One of the beasts shambled after him, he stepped aside and dashed the lantern in its face. The ladder was creaking under Bernabo's weight.

"Up with you," Silvain cried and threw his lantern away and drew his sword. He halted a moment by the foot of the ladder, struck at the muzzle of the angry beast that came at him again, checked it and climbed fast on Bernabo's heels.

At the top Bernabo turned and looked at him eye to eye.

"By the holy rock, you are bold," Bernabo muttered.

"Here is your man, sir," Silvain said and thrust into his arms the bleeding, senseless body. "God send him better fortune."

And so at last he came to the children and dismissed the hungry Thibaut to his supper, and Barbara asking anxiously what all the noise was in the courtyard, was told that a poor man had fallen into the bear-pit but they had got him out and the bears were not much hurt.

It was late when Thibaut came back to the tower and the children were asleep. Silvain sat in the little room outside theirs reading psalms.

"So you have been in another venture, lord," Messire Thibaut grinned.

"What have you heard, brother?"

"I have heard that you are a hero and a paladin. Even Bernabo's men they sing your praises now. But what happened I can not tell."

"I think some one has tried again, brother," said Silvain mildly. "I think that fall was meant for me."

Thibaut twisted his eyebrows.

"Bernabo is the villain then."

"That I do not know."

"It was Bernabo's men who were round the pit."

"Is Bernabo master of his men? Is Bernabo his own master? I do not know. Patience, brother. We are not at the end."

And they lay down to sleep with the door open between their little room and the children's. But they had no more alarms that night and another day went quietly as those that had gone before.

WHEN Silvain went to supper he found the mayor with Stefano, and the bishop, and the mayor was not pleased to see him.

"What, is the French knight to sit with us, my lord?" the mayor growled.

"Sir Silvain is my guest, Paolo," said Stefano with dignity.

"I thought we were to be private."

"I have no secrets from the knight who guards my brother's children."

"What office has he that he should sit with us?" the mayor grumbled. "Who chose him?"

Stefano laughed. "Not I, Paolo. I think it was fate—and my lord bishop here."

"I think it was God's hand, my son," said the bishop gravely.

"I know it was not me," the mayor growled. "Choose a wolf for your sheep-dog, do not blame me if you lose lambs."

"Sir, you are not courteous," said Silvain. "I pray you, why do you speak ill of me?"

The mayor looked him up and down with contempt. "I do not speak for myself. I speak for the good people of Novara. What they say, I say. By St. Antony, you shall not stop me, you nor any man."

"Sir, Novara is fortunate," said Silvain gently. "If the gentleman would be private with you, my lords, I am in the way."

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"Never heed him, sir. He is surly but honest, our Paolo," Stefano laughed. "Here are no secrets. We have to look to the order of the funeral, that is all."

And so they did while Silvain ate his supper, passing the papers from hand to hand. The bishop was careful that he should see them all and marked out a place for him to walk by the children in the procession to the cathedral. And the mayor scowled but bore it, and Silvain found nothing to change. He left them still talking of funereal pomp.

In the middle of the night as he lay by the children's door, he waked to faint sounds. He was up, sword in hand, on the instant silently. Standing hidden, he peered into the children's room. A candle burnt there, making a glimmer of light in the wide, dim spaces. It seemed to him that a shadow moved upon the tapestry. And Barbara started up in her bed crying—

"Silvain! Silvain! There is some one in the room."

Silvain came to her, Silvain darted by her bed to the place where that shadow had flickered. The tapestry was swaying. He dashed it aside and saw nothing but the paneling. He could not tell whether it was the paneling that creaked.

"Lights, brother, lights," he called, and Thibaut ran in with a lantern, and lighted candles all round the room.

There was no one to be seen, nothing. But Barbara screamed:

"What is it, Silvain? Why did he come? I am afraid, I am afraid!"

"Who came, my queen?" Thibaut croaked.

"I do not know. It was a black man. Silvain! Silvain!" For Silvain was going out by the door that led to the state apartments and Stefano.

Thibaut whirled round. Other people were coming in, servants, women and men, roused by the noise. They made a clamor of questions:

"What is it, my lady? Who frightened you?"

"Oh, do not come here," Gian said angrily "We do not want you. There was a man and Sir Silvain is looking for him."

"A man! Our lady have mercy!" the women cried, and ran at Barbara who was crying into her pillow.

The men trampled out after Silvain. He had come upon Stefano, Stefano in his bed-gown, candle in hand, much distressed.

"Holy heaven, sir, what has happened? Are the children in trouble?"

"They saw a man in their room, my lord. I look for him."

"A man in their room! Good angels defend us! Did you see him, sir?"

"I can not tell."

"You can not tell!" Stefano laughed angrily and thrust by him into the room, "Gian, what did you see, boy?"

"I did not see any one. She saw him."

"A black man, a black man," Barbara sobbed.

"Why, the child has been dreaming," said Stefano and turned on Silvain. "I wonder at you, sir. Rouse the castle because a baby has a bad dream! That is brave, by my faith. You serve her well. You have frightened her little soul with your alarms. A nurse is what she needs, not a knight who makes his own romances."

He swept from the room with dignity and the servants tittered, but some of the women cried out that Barbara was a poor lamb and tried to take her to their bosoms. Silvain had much work to get rid of them.

In the morning when he had sent the children out with Thibaut he drew back the tapestry and tried that paneling in daylight. He found the cracks of a sliding door, pried it open with his dagger and came out in the anteroom of the state chamber of the Count of Novara.

But it was Stefano who hurried in on him, crying—

"What do you seek, sir?"

"Does your brother's ghost walk, my lord?" said Silvain and crossed himself. "God rest him! But there is a door hidden in that wall where my lady Barbara saw her black man."

"Hidden! Why, all the castle knows it."

"But no one told me," said Silvain.

And he went back and put nails in that sliding door. But his labor was wasted.

THE pomp of the funeral was set in array in the courtyard. Bernabo and his men with black scarfs upon their breastplates to lead the way, the servants in purple and black, Stefano cloaked and plumed in front of the coffin and its priests, and behind that great expanse of purple the children. Barbara, small and wan in her mourning, shrank against Silvain, Gian stood out boldly,

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but often he gave a quick side glance at them. Last of all came the chamberlain and the chief butler and a gorgeous aged company of the higher servants.

So they marched out into the streets of Novara, passing through a crowd that hardly left them room. They moved through a murmur of talk, hushed only where the coffin was.

And after a little way Silvain saw men point at him. Then some one cried a curse on the foreigner, and as they came into the heart of the town, the long procession winding through narrow streets, he heard a hiss. On the instant the crowd took it up and all the way to the cathedral as Silvain came men and women hissed him fiercely and made the sign of the evil eye.

Gian looked at him and turned a haughty face upon the crowd. Barbara caught his hand and clung to it. And Silvain walked with his head high looking straight before him and far. And Messire Thibaut shrank into himself and slunk along, a grotesque figure of wo.

But no harm came to him. They passed into the cathedral and there in the gloom, in the wailing music and the heavy incense-laden air, found peace. It was a long ordeal for the children, and the proclamation of all the titles and glories of the dead man, the solemn elaborate ritual of the Mass for the dead and the symbols of mortality and the throb of the chants wore away the courage of their troubled hearts. When their father's body was laid at last to rest in the gulf beside the altar, when through the blare of trumpets, the funeral procession passed out again into the bright sunshine, Barbara and Gian had each an arm of Silvain's to bear them up and needed it much.

The crowd in the cathedral square had not diminished, not changed its temper. It was noisier than before. When Silvain was seen in the light, not hisses but a roar of hatred met him.

"Murderer! Foreign brigand! French wolf! Stand off from our children! Down with him!"

So the people howled at him and the crowd seethed and surged.

Close by the cathedral the ground was kept by men of the bishop's household, and for a while Silvain could march freely.

"Pray God no man thinks to throw a stone," Messire Thibaut mumbled in his ear. "Else shall we all be dead as St. Stephen."

Silvain was looking ahead. The procession moved steadily on and found no trouble. Bernabo's horsemen were already out of sight, the ranks of servants, Stefano and his gentlemen, marching away in peace. Only about Silvain the storm raged and there it was loud, though there came from it nothing but noise.

"Turn back, lord," Thibaut muttered.

"Take sanctuary in the cathedral."

"Peace, brother, peace. If we turn or show fear, we are lost."

Silvain strode on boldly and the children huddled against him, wide eyes in wan faces, watching the crowd.

They had turned out of the cathedral square into a narrow street, a street like all the rest, of high walls with few windows and iron barred oaken gates set far apart, for the houses were built about quadrangles. Suddenly the procession was broken. Behind Stefano the crowd surged into it and all the street was confusion of jostling people and through the press came a rush of lads howling—

"The French wolf, the murderer!"

Silvain thrust the children into Thibaut's arms, Silvain's sword came out and swept a space clear about him.

"To the wall, brother," he said. "Into the gateway there," and he broke a way through and Thibaut set the children down in the shelter of the arch of the gate and turned to fight by his master's side.

"Ho, you men of Novara," Silvain shouted. "I fight for your children. Who comes against them?"

The mass of the crowd held off, whether for fear of his sword or shame, but cleaving through, like disciplined men at the charge came that party of lads howling—

"Down with the French wolf! Kill, kill!"

The gate behind the children yielded a little and they tumbled back. Thibaut caught at them with a groan of despair, but Silvain flung himself on the opening, dragged the children in after him and Thibaut, and he set their shoulders to the oaken timbers and slammed the gate to and drew the bolts.

"Pity me," Thibaut gasped. "Was that ill luck or good? Now we are in where are we?"

He looked round an empty courtyard, a pleasant place where little trees stood in tubs and a fountain sparkled.

Silvain was lifting from the ground what

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looked like a bundle of clothes but produced from its midst the yellow wrinkled face of an old woman. She pulled at the cap that covered her sparse hair and her mouth opened to let a squeak of laughter out between toothless gums.

"Good thanks, mother," Silvain said, and kissed her and set her down.

Her hands clawed at the children, who shrank from her.

"Oh my pretties, my pretties," she said, and still that squeaking, wheezing laughter came from her.

The mob was beating against the door and through the grating Silvain could see faces distorted and slavering.

"Open! Open! Novara! Novara!" they were yelling. "Who is within? The Frenchman is in your house! Open, open."

The old woman shuffled off across the courtyard now beckoning petulantly that they should follow, now laying a finger on her lips. Silvain and Thibaut took the children and caught up with her.

"Whose house is this, mother?" Silvain said.

"Master Paolo's," she said and wheezed out more laughter and took his hand and patted it and still shambled on.

There was movement in the house too, people hurrying downstairs from the roof or the high windows whence they had been watching the procession. The old woman went the faster. She led them into a dark entry and through a storehouse, and stopped and struggled with a lock. A narrow door was opened which gave upon a lane. She flung herself upon the children and kissed them as though she would eat them, then she thrust them from her and slammed the door behind them.

"And where are we now we are out?" said Messire Thibaut looking up and down the empty lane.

On their side were the hinder parts of houses, a range of squalid, low buildings. On the other a blank wall of limestone well built and well kept which guarded a park or garden.

"I do not know the cursed town," Messire Thibaut grumbled.

Silvain pointed at a flag which was flying over some house behind the wall. It drooped about the staff half-mast high but he could make out on it crossed swords and keys.

"That must be the bishop's palace," he said. "Let us trust him, brother."

"I trust none now, as the dog said when the sheep butted him," quoth Thibaut, but he dragged his lank body to the top of the wall.

Silvain lifted Barbara and kissed her wet, strained face and smiled at her. "Courage, my lady. Here you go to the other side of the world," he said, and he swung her up to Thibaut.

Gian was climbing by himself. So they came down through the boughs of a fig-tree into a quiet garden.

But away in the front of Master Paolo's house there was no quiet.

WHILE the mob still yammered at the door, Master Paolo himself came hurrying into the street majestic in all his mayor's dignity, furred robe and gold chain, and his sword-bearer and his mace-bearer labored to clear a way for him and he lifted up a mighty voice and called:

"Stand off, I charge you, stand off. I will do right."

Some of the boisterous lads at the gate heard him in spite of their own din.

"Master mayor, the Frenchman has carried off the children. He has them in your house."

"In my house?" The mayor swore. "Are you mad? What accursed folly is this?"

From the other end of the street Bernabo and his men were pushing into the crowd.

"Dogs and apes!" Bernabo roared. "Stand back or you taste steel."

Afoot beside him Stefano urged him on. But the crowd, though they shrank from the horses, could not yield them much room and there was shrieking and struggling and staves were raised and daggers came out and the horsemen were checked. They lacked zeal for this mob fighting.

"By the holy rock, there is the rogue mayor," said Bernabo.

"Paolo! Where are the children, Paolo?" Stefano called.

"They are in his house. They were taken into the mayor's house," a woman screamed.

Bernabo dashed spurs into his horse and forced it plunging through the crowd.

"Out with them, Paolo!" he roared. "They are not for you, by ——!"

And he and one or two of his men and Stefano, scrambling among them, broke through to the mayor.

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"This is wicked work, captain," the mayor cried. "Look what you do."

For Bernabo's ruthless charge had roused the crowd and some were surging after him and some pressing against the rest of his men to beat them out of the street, and tempers were out of hand.

"Give us the children, you dog."

"If they are in my house, they are safe," the mayor said. "Safe at last, my lord Stefano."

"What do you mean, sirrah?"

"God knows they were not safe with you, my lord. Neither they nor their father."

"Dog and son of a dog," Bernabo roared and struck at him.

Mace-bearer and sword-bearer thrust between them, crying shame.

"Stand by me, good people!" the mayor called. "These brigands would kill me too. Novara! Novara! The liberties of Novara!"

"Novara!"

Many voices answered him and the crowd closed to his aid. One of the lads at the gate slashed with his dagger at Bernabo's horse and the horse fell hamstrung and the press closed upon Bernabo and Stefano, and they and their men went down in the midst, fighting like beasts against beasts. There was no help for them. The rest of Bernabo's men were driven out of the street and away, crushed and falling on the waves of the mob.

ON THIS evil din came the sound of a psalm, "Put thou thy trust in the Lord and be doing good——"

The words were lost in the din, the solemn chant made itself heard. The banner of a saint was raised high above the crowd——

"Leave off from wrath and let go displeasure: fret not thyself, else shalt thou be moved to do evil."

It came from the cathedral square. Borne in a chair on men's shoulders, all white and gold the bishop was seen. The crowd made way for him and the singing priests about him and so he drew near the fight and when he saw it he lifted up his hands and cried:

"My children, my children, will you kill me too? In the name of God, peace!"

Then he pointed his finger at the mayor and called:

"Paolo! Paolo, stand out and answer me! Here is the devil's work. By whose will, Paolo?"

But the fight was over then, for Bernabo and Stefano were beaten down and their men were swept away, and the mayor made answer quietly enough.

"By whose will, my lord? Ask them who lie there!"

"God have mercy! What have you done?"

"I have struck no man, my lord," said Paolo. "Here came the rogue Bernabo and my lord Stefano, and set upon me and the people would not bear it and there they lie."

"Oh, miserable!" the bishop cried. "Will you leave them lying like beasts in the dust?"

"Now God forbid," said the mayor. "They shall be cared for," and he bustled off to his gate, which now stood ajar with servants clustering to peer out. These he swept away, flinging the gate wide.

"Lift them and bring them in, they are welcome," he called over his shoulder and himself went on and caught his steward by the arm and drew the fellow into a corner of the courtyard.

"What the —— have you been at, Giuseppe? What is this of the children? Where are they?"

"By the holy rock, that is more than I know, master. I think they are bewitched. We were all up aloft looking out at the funeral and there was a riot and the children and the Frenchman were penned at the gate. Then the gate came open, God knows how; we could not see; we were watching the street. But when we ran down the gate was shut and there was no one in the courtyard. The crowd was beating at the gate, but I dared not open. Then came your fight."

"Who the —— opened the gate?"

"The devil himself for all I know."

"Oh fool! Where are the children gone? They must be hidden somewhere."

The mayor hurried into the house.

A bundle of clothes was huddled by the tub of one of the orange trees. It wheezed laughter as he went and a gaunt yellow face came out of it and nodded.

Beside Stefano and Bernabo where they lay in the hall the bishop knelt. But Stefano was dead already and Bernabo, though still his hand was clenched on his dagger, breathed up blood and groaned.

"God give you mercy, my son," the bishop said. "Do you go to Him clean?"

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"Where are the children?" Bernabo said quickly.

"Alas, I can not tell. Oh, my son, think of your own soul now. Do you go clean to God?"

Bernabo groaned and his tortured eyes rolled.

"I was true to my Lord Camillo while he lived," he muttered.

"Be glad of that in this hour. You have been true to the end."

Bernabo looked at the bishop. Bernabo raised himself on his elbow and looked at Stefano's dead face.

"He is gone," he said. "I go too. Let it be." And he laughed.

The bishop held up the golden cross that hung from his breast. Bernabo looked away.

"Oh my son, is it well with your soul?"

"As well as with his," Bernabo grinned. "Will you shrive us both? We go together, where we go. And he leads, by God. I have nothing on my soul but his work. He set me on to kill the Frenchman. I am sorry for it. The man is a bold knight."

"God forgive you your sin," the bishop cried. "Oh, what ill had the man done you?"

"Stefano—Stefano wanted to come at the children—the Frenchman—he was in the way."

The mayor bustled into the hall, red and fuming. He saw the bishop and Bernabo close in talk.

"What has that rogue to say, my lord?" he cried and came to them.

"Aha, Paolo, old Paolo," Bernabo said thickly and he grinned. "Here is a secret for you, old Paolo."

And as the mayor bent to hear he drove his dagger into the man's eye.

Down upon him the mayor fell and they lay together in their blood. But it was Bernabo who chuckled till in a little while he died.

THE mayor's servants brought into the hall that old, old woman and led her to where the bishop prayed by the dead.

"Paolo is gone," she crooned. "Paolo is gone too."

The bishop opened his eyes and flinched.

"Alas, poor mother, pray for your son," he said.

"I do not pray." The old woman made mouths at him. "I knew Paolo. He is gone."

She shuffled out to the courtyard again and sat down in the sunshine.

The bishop came by her on his way out and he crossed himself and blessed her. But she was asleep.

Out in the streets the crowd was noisy, here cursing Bernabo and his men, there arguing over the fame of the mayor and all around debating where the children might be. The good people of Novara found life vastly interesting.

Through their babble the bishop was borne in his golden chair, heeding no one, hiding a wan face in his hand. To his palace he came. A chaplain hurried to help him to the ground and taking the weary arm said eagerly:

"Come, my lord, come, we have guests for you." The bishop lifted his eyes. "The little children, my lord."

AN ARBOR of golden Austrian roses threw shade on the turf above a pond where lilies swam white, and in the shade the children lay asleep. Beside them a fountain murmured and made little rainbows, and by the fountain sat Silvain giving crumbs in his hand to a dove.

The bishop stood still.

"God be thanked," he murmured and said a prayer. "Oh, my friend—" he leaned heavily on Silvain's shoulder—"I have come out of hell."

Silvain looked up and his eyes were bright and hard.

"They also, the little ones," he said. "By my faith, they have suffered. Are they safe here, my lord? They come to your arms for refuge. Are you strong enough to uphold them?"

The bishop smiled sadly. "It is not by my strength they are delivered. I am a weak man and blind. God forgive me, my town was in the hands of wickedness and I did not know. I did not know. Oh, my son, the reek of blood is upon me."

And he told of the fight of Bernabo and Stefano and the mayor and the mob, and Bernabo's confession and his killing of the mayor.

"It is for the soul of Bernabo I will say a prayer," said Silvain gently.

The bishop shuddered. "He of them all! He who died doing murder!"

"He died killing like a wolf at bay. But

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it is in my heart that Bernabo was no wolf when this work began. Not he nor his murdered Count Camillo. That I know well."

"Who then?" The bishop stared at him.

"My lord, why did the town hiss at me to-day? Who taught them? Why did lads rush upon me as I walked with the children? Who were they? One I knew and another, and they were of the band that killed Count Camillo. I pray you, who was it that could raise the town and had his murderers in the town? Master mayor knows that, my lord." Silvain smiled. "I do not pray for him, not I."

The bishop quivered. "What fancy is this?" he cried. "It was Stefano who sought to murder you and the children, Bernabo confessed it."

"I do not doubt him. Thus I see the thing, my father. Your mayor planned to kill Count Camillo and the children that he might hold Novara at his will. For Stefano was weak and he would be an easy meal. I came on the murderers before their work was done and the father only was killed and the children lived.

"But then Stefano saw only two children between him and the throne. Weak he was and he was tempted. He plotted to murder me and them. But the mayor held to his purpose. He was the shrewder man. He saw that he might raise the town against me and strike the children down in killing me. It was a good plot, my lord."

The bishop stared at him. "God have mercy, who knows the minds of men," he murmured. "Oh, Paolo! Paolo! And he died in a moment, black with sin!" He shuddered. "And his own mother would not pray for him."

"His mother?" Silvain said quickly. "An old, old woman? She was watching this riot. She saw the children's peril. She let us into his house and led us away. So are we safe. And all the while she laughed."

"She—she knew then! The mother who bore him! God help her." The bishop bowed his head in his hands. "But she stood guard that he should not accomplish his sin. By the mercy of our Lord he may be saved for his mother's sake."

Silvain did not answer, and the only sound in the garden was the prattle of the fountain and the murmur of the pigeons and the quiet breath of the children as they slept.

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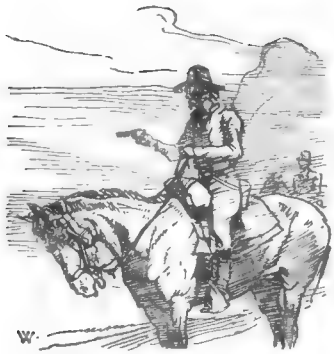

POWER

A Complete Novelette

By

E. S. Pladwell

Author of "The Gila Kid," "The Education of Edgar," etc.

SIX armed horsemen clattered into a stony dry-wash some twenty-five miles west of the desert town of Sandstorm. They reined in beside a gray-white rock and tied bandanna handkerchiefs over the lower parts of their faces, disclosing only their eyes. Six red bandanna handkerchiefs changed them from ordinary riders to masked bandits.

"Stage is comin'!" remarked a short, stocky man with bandy legs, the leader. "Better scatter; we'll come at it from the sides."

The horsemen ran their animals behind sun-blistered rocks. The rattle of the stage and the pounding of its horses' hoofs came to their ears distinctly, though it had not yet reached the edge of the dry-wash. The bow-legged leader of the bandits looked about carefully, like a stage-manager giving a last glance at his show. The bandit saw only one disturbing element, the weather.

The air was hot and sultry. Ominous slate-black clouds, strangely yellowish, stood across the western sky behind the timbered hills above Spring Garden mesa, ten miles away.

But the mind of the bandit leader was on his immediate business.

Suddenly six bay horses clattered up to the edge of the draw and started the abrupt descent into the region of sand, rocks and round pebbles. The horses pulled an open four-seated stage. On the front seat sat the driver and a passenger. The other seats were empty.

The bandit leader sat erect on his horse, alertly efficient. In his right hand was a six-shooter which he leveled at the driver.

The effect was instantaneous. The driver's alarmed feet kicked at the brake. His hands yanked the reins. The lead horses came back on their haunches and the whole outfit skidded a few feet at the edge of the gulley and then stopped. The driver—lanky, unshaven, lantern-jawed, chewing tobacco—held his hands and whip high. The blond young passenger decided to do likewise.

The five other bandits rode from concealment and flanked the stage.

"That's right!" said the terse leader, as he rode up to the vehicle and dismounted. "Now we'll see what you've got!"

The other horsemen left their animals and boarded the stage with him. There was nothing in view but the two persons, the four seats and a valise full of rumpled clothes. The leader disdained to look at the latter. He seemed to know exactly what he wanted. He jumped into the seat behind the young passenger and nudged him with a thumb—

"Cough up!"

The passenger, a well-built, round-faced, sandy-haired young man in gray store-clothes, high boots and broad-trimmed hat, was plainly irritated. His keen blue-gray eyes frowned into the menacing brown ones of the bandit leader.

"What makes you think I have anything?" he parried.

"Aw, come off, Williams! You're bringin'

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home the pay-roll for your workmen buildin' that there electric-light plant on your ranch!"

"Seems like you know a lot about my business!"

"Sure! Do you suppose folks haven't watched what you've been doin' up in Camesa Cañon?"

The passenger drew a little farther away. His forehead was creased. His expressive mouth was twitching slightly at the corners. He darted a few glances at the other men surrounding him, and saw little that was optimistic in the situation. He talked again.

"Just how close have you watched my affairs?" he inquired.

"Oh, close enough." The bandit didn't mind chatting. "You've got your power-house three-quarters finished. You've bought your wire and machinery. They're on the way. You've sold some cattle and you're bringin' seven thousand dollars home from 'Frisco to finish up the job!"

The passenger took a long time to reply—

"It looks as if there's been some spying done!"

"Sure," admitted the bandit, easily. "We do things *right!* Anything else you'd like to know?"

"Yes. Your name."

"Never mind that. Cough up that money!"

Williams looked thoughtfully toward the white rocks glaring in the sun at the side of the stage. The bandit, courteously waiting, studied his blond profile, with the high forehead, flexible mouth, straight jaw, and a broken nose.

Dick Williams took time for cogitating. He knew he couldn't afford this loss. It was his last available money. It was among the last of the resources of the failing Camesa ranch. He knew the loss might mean ruin. He felt a wild resentment against these plotting outsiders who were kicking his plans to pieces.

Suddenly he reached toward his hip-pocket.

He knew it was a wild act, but he took the desperate chance. One instant might decide for him. If he could get the leader and take shelter behind him——

His hand clutched the butt of a short-barreled revolver. The bandit moved at the same instant. Williams yanked out the pistol. The bandit grabbed his arm, almost too late. The other men closed in. The driver tried to edge away.

"You darned fool!" he yelped.

Dick Williams tried to arise. Something came down upon his head. Dick swayed. A numbing sensation assailed his right arm. The leader of the robbers struck him with a heavy pistol-barrel. Crash! Dick saw stars. He felt another blow. Then blackness came upon him.

He was giddy when he awoke. Objects reeled in front of his eyes. He felt a canteen jammed into his mouth. He took a draft of water, blinked, and looked around. Things came into focus. The driver was alongside him, holding an arm around his shoulder. Beyond the heads of six bay horses he saw a dry-wash full of white rocks and small pebbles. Just a dry-wash, silent under a hot sun. Nothing else. The horsemen had disappeared like ghosts. Dick sat up and rubbed his eyes. The greenish mountains beyond Spring Garden were growing black. Sometimes the scene flickered garishly. He thought it was his throbbing eyes. It was lightning.

"I'm robbed, all right!" muttered Dick, feeling where his money-belt should have been.

"Yeh," agreed the lanky driver, complacently. "You're robbed."

"Where did those men go?"

"Scattered. On hosses. You shouldn't have fought 'em!"

"I couldn't help it."

"Huh! Even a tenderfoot would know better!"

"I know. But that money meant a lot!" Dick ruefully fingered a big lump behind his ear. "Lend me a horse. I'll try to follow 'em."

"Hey!" roared the driver, amazed. "Don't you know when you've had enough?"

"I've had plenty; but I want my money!"

The driver shifted his chew.

"Stubborn! Consarn it, you're the same sort of bull-headed idjut your daddy was! No wonder your folks up at the ranch calls you 'Stubborn Dick.' Huh! Well, you ain't armed, you ain't feelin' spry just now, I ain't got a saddle, and I can't spare any hosses. We've got a long pull ahead of us. And that's that!"

"Give me a horse! You go back to Sandstorm and report it to the sheriff!"

"Huh! You know how many robbers he'd ketch!"

"Yes; I've heard that."

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"It's been that way for eight years—since 'ninety-two," grumbled the gossipy driver. "Lots of folks hate the politicians at Sandstorm, but who's goin' to change things? Spring Garden ain't got the votes. Last county convention we had a candidate, but they got him in a corner and made him withdraw——"

"Oh, give me a horse!" snapped Dick, impatiently. "I want to follow the trail of that crowd!"

"They've scattered."

"Then I'll follow the leader!"

Dick jumped off the stage, retrieved his revolver from the ground where it had fallen, and started undoing the harness of the off-lead horse.

"Hey!" yelled the driver.

"I can't afford to lose seven thousand dollars!" snapped Dick. "I'm going!"

He did. Despite the driver's outraged yells he undid the bay horse from its harness, threw the trappings into the rear of the stage, curtailed the animal's reins, tidied things up nicely for the team, and then mounted, after a searching look at the ground amid the pebbles of the dry-wash. He rode bareback.

The driver gave it up. He shrugged lazily.

"Don't do nothin' rash!" he cautioned, releasing the brakes with a disgusted snap. "Julia! Jenny! Git along! Pull into it! Never mind loafin'—one stubborn durned fool is enough!"

The bays shouldered into the collars. The traces came taut. The stage started across the dry-wash and toward the stormy hills.

DICK WILLIAMS swung to the left and followed a dim trail which showed at times among the rocks and sands of the dry-wash. It was just one trail out of six; but Dick kept to it. He rode out of the dry-wash and into a range country, southwest of the Spring Garden mesa. A few cattle appeared among the brush and chaparral. He was approaching the uttermost borders of his own ranch. The trail led him straight across it.

He came toward the mouth of Camesa Cañon. The humidity of the air increased. The clouds were blacker and nearer. Queer air-currents began to ruffle the brush. A newspaper—coming from heaven knows where—skittered across a flat place, jumped uphill toward the cañon, and draped itself around a sage-brush.

Dick thought he saw the form of a man on horseback, on a little rise ahead of him; but a mist came down and fogged the scene. Then rain began to patter upon him—big drops, increasing in rapidity. He galloped his horse. The rain came heavier. Vision was obscured; but he held to the dim hoof-print trail until the rains battered the marks away. Then he rode blindly, straight toward the mouth of his cañon, which lay farther up in the hills.

He had no particular plans. He only wanted to get a clew of some sort. He knew now that he was the object of a plot. He wanted to know who was in it. Fight? Not yet. He wasn't able to!

The ground grew muddy under his horse's feet. The rain came through his clothes and drenched him. He hunched forward. Suddenly a great roaring, booming sound came to his ears. He stopped. It was as if a thousand clubs were hitting the ground—*thud—thud—thud.*

"The cañon's flooding!" he gasped.

Somewhere through the pattering lines of rain he saw the figure ahead. He peered forward. It was a man, on a gray horse, disappearing again in the blur. One of the robbers was on a gray horse! Dick was sure of it. He went forward cautiously and soon fell in with fresh hoof-prints, cleanly set in the earth.

The roaring sound grew nearer. Lightning flashed. Dick braced himself forward and followed the blurred figure. The roaring sound became a demoniac thing. The man ahead halted. So did Dick. The man on the gray horse seemed to consider. He, too, heard that ominous sound!

Suddenly, with a crash, a great streak of spray, foam and muddy water came down upon the foremost rider like an avalanche spewed forth from the mouth of Camesa Cañon. He dug his spurs into his horse and wheeled. Too late. The muddy waters leaped upon him. The horse staggered, tripped, fell, struggled. The man rolled under. The water surged above them.

There was a scream.

Dick, galloping madly toward the hills, felt the cold perspiration on his face. He couldn't do anything for the man. The man was gone irrevocably. It was all Dick could do to save himself!

"Well," he observed, dazedly, as he reached higher ground, "that's one gone, anyhow! Now there's only five of them!"

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II

TOM JEFFRIES, the leather-faced, gray-haired, wrinkle-necked old foreman of the Camesa outfit, had seen the storm coming far back in the higher mountains. As he peered from a window of the aged wooden ranch-house, now rattling with the winds, he fingered his long gray mustache thoughtfully.

In the nearer distance he saw the cañon, a deep gash that ran below the house; and almost within the cañon stood the power-house, now taking shape. On a clear day the whole upper headwater lands could be viewed from here, an enormous green panorama terminating in white-topped peaks; but today the upper lands were inky black. Queer gray hazes blurred the side-hills from Tom's eyes.

"Petey!" he bawled.

A small figure entered from a rear porch and stepped gingerly upon the faded blue carpet of the old living-room, with its rocking-chairs, horse-hair sofa, melodeon, writing-desk and open fireplace.

The newcomer at first glance resembled a tiny but formidable walrus. His cowpuncher outfit and high-heeled boots went unnoticed because of his enormous mustache—a big brown thing which jutted forth like a belligerent geyser. Back of this rampant hirsute barrier appeared a thin and trustful face and a pair of round eyes eternally threatening to pop.

"See that storm?" bawled old Tom. "It's a cloudburst up in the hills, mebbe!"

Petey crossed the room and peered out.

"Thass right!" he agreed. "'S a big storm!"

"Mebbe there'll be water rampin' down the cañon."

Petey blinked.

"Thass right! A cloudburst makes a lot o' water. Thass right. It'll be pretty wet."

"I'm worried about the power-house. She's high up, on a shelf, but she may not stand a flood. Here. I'll stay here and watch things. You ride down to the pastures. Tell the boys to get the cattle away from the mouth of the cañon!"

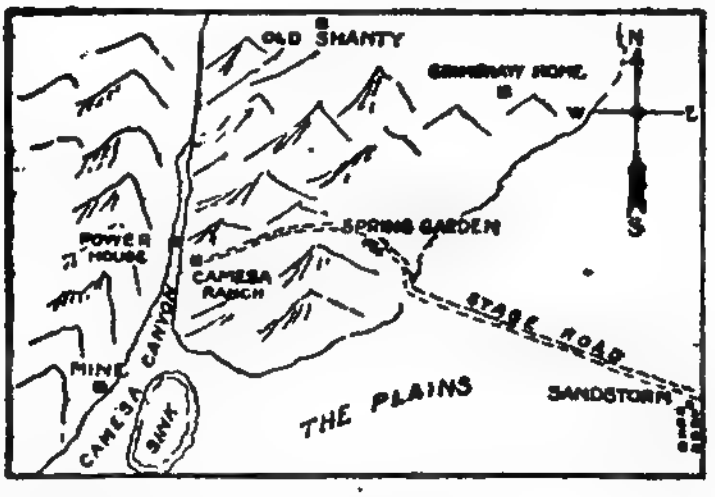
Petey ran outside, clanking his big spurs.

Old Tom grabbed a coat and started for the power-house. His strong old face, with its bushy eyebrows, registered a sort of patient disgust as he glanced along the ditch which ran high on the side of the cañon, and appraised the heaps of sheet-iron, concrete-forms, lumber and cement on the shelf where the little power-house was to stand.

"Not my idea of improvements!" he snorted. "New contraptions! Something Dick started with his durned college learnin'! Tin pots! Junk!"

He knew his mind and heart belonged in the freer days. He was not convinced that the new order of things meant progress; in fact he vaguely believed it meant going backward.

There was a house up in Green Valley, for instance, a few miles beyond Spring Garden, a two-storied structure hard by an apple orchard, a residence with slanting roofs, a cupola, and scrolled wooden dewdabs around the eaves and porches and windows. To Tom it represented the most



gorgeous and dignified and awe-inspiring structure his eyes had ever witnessed. It stood behind a green lawn enclosed by an iron picket-railing; and on the lawn was a white, three-decked iron fountain, squirting water whenever a hose was turned on. Flanking the fountain were two iron deer, one rampant and the other couchant. An iron jockey holding a hitching-ring stood in front of the front gate. A stately residence! A residence built by a neighboring cattle-king who came to this country in 'fifty-nine and later became a judge. A judge of law, a judge of horses and a judge of good whisky. He wanted to build the finest house that money could buy—it was 1869 then—and by gosh, he did it! That house was grand!

And now? Well, the judge was under the sod. The old house was bought for almost nothing by a tall, scrawny, lantern-jawed drifter from Nebraska who suffered from religion and played hymns every evening

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on the old melodeon for himself and his daughter. Hymns in Judge Pryor's house! Hymns!

"Yes, sir," growled Tom, "the world has sort of gone to pot!"

And yet he remembered his thrill of pride when young Dick went away to college, five years before. College! Now, wouldn't that bust you? Nobody else in this here country had ever sent his boy to college; no, sir; it took a man like old Jack Williams to do that! Good old Jack! Sleeping now, on the little hill just above Spring Garden; gone with the forty thousand head of cattle which used to toss their horns in the wide ranges which once stretched over the Spring Garden mesa and almost half-way to Sandstorm! Old Tom remembered them wistfully as he stared at the new-fangled contraption in the cañon below him.

"A junk ranch!" he groaned. "Junk! Wires and pots, tin pipes and water-wheels! What's the world comin' to?"

But he knew old Jack had been a poor manager. Everything was gone but a paltry fifteen hundred cattle. The broad acres were curtailed. The net result of it all stood in the cañon now, a power-house, a stark attempt to build something out of defeat! Old Tom understood; he sympathized with Dick, the heir to this outfit and yet his cowman's soul was mortified.

"Turnin' a ranch into a tinker's shop!" he growled. "Huh! I wish Dick was here, durn him!"

But the old foreman did his part. He mobilized the hired workmen in the cañon and hauled up as much stuff as possible. The storm came nearer. Lightning flashed. Thunder banged. Rain poured down and the earth became mud; but the men held to their task. Finally old Tom, peering anxiously up the cañon, saw what he had feared. There had been a cloudburst up in the hills after all!

"All up!" he roared. "She's on the way!"

The workmen, in the semi-darkness, scrambled up-hill. Tom now peered down-cañon anxiously, though he believed that only a few cattle were at the distant mouth of the great gully. Probably Petey had been able to warn the riders in time!

Tom led the way to the ranch-house. The men reached the porch, with its musical barrage of water. A shrieking roar came in their ears. The earth began to shake.

Old Tom looked downward. The sight below made him dizzy.

A vast streaky torrent seethed down the cañon like a mill-race, churning itself into mad frenzy where its vanguard licked over new ground. The torrent swiftly rose to the level of the power-house floor. It lashed at the concrete foundations. Baffled, it backed up for a moment and threw big waves rearward along the cañon. Then it seemed to push!

Crash! The shelf gave away. Half an acre of ground slid into the seething flood. The concrete-forms and the lumber of the half-finished power-house whirled around, dived, and disappeared!

"And now we're where we started!" groaned Tom. "Busted! Busted because of a dog-goned, new-fangled tin-pot contraption that shouldn't have been here in the first place!"

Old Tom looked at the adobe mud squishing under his feet.

"The poor kid! The poor kid!"

Bang! A bolt of lightning landed on a fir-tree just across the little roadway. Old Tom fairly leaped into the front room, where an atmosphere of musty dryness contrasted with the pouring waters outside.

WHEN Tom's ears quit ringing and his eyes quit flickering he observed that a slender, hook-nosed, sharp-eyed young man in blue clothes sat in a plush chair. The man quickly arose and extended a hand to the wet foreman.

"Howdy! My name's Linck, from Sandstorm. I want to see Mister Williams on business."

"What business?" growled old Tom, taking off his wet coat.

"Personal."

"Suit yourself. He'll be here tonight or tomorrow."

Dick arrived at dusk. His face was battered, he was dead weary, his clothes were wringing wet, his eyes were haggard and his expression was tired and hopeless. As his dripping horse tramped up to the ranch-house, Tom opened the door and laid a hand on Dick's thigh. Dick was staring at the wreckage of the cañon.

"Too bad!" said old Tom, softly.

"It is," agreed Dick, dismounting. "We couldn't have foreseen that! There's never

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been a cloudburst here before! And on top of that, I've been held up!"

"Held up?"

Dick gave a short description of his stage-ride.

"Now we're broke proper!" observed Tom, at the end of it.

"Let's go in," said Dick, listlessly.

The jobless workmen were inside. Dick doffed his dripping overcoat and started to parley with them. The marks of his recent battering were quite apparent now and his hair was tousled; but somehow he made them see his situation. They went to another room to talk it over. Then Sam Linck came forward.

The room was now dark, but a faint glow from the fireplace illumined the guest's lean face and slim body as he brought his chair nearer Dick, who sat at his desk.

"My name's Linck; Sam Linck," he began. "Maybe I came here just at the right time. I've heard you talkin' to the workmen. You've been robbed, haven't you?"

"Yes."

"Your power-house scheme is gone?"

"Yes."

"Your workmen want their money?"

"Yes."

"You've only got a few cattle left, haven't you?"

Dick looked irritated.

"Yes, yes!"

"Maybe you're pretty near busted, ain't you?"

"What of it?"

"Just this. I'm here with an offer to buy Camesa Cañon."

There was an awkward pause. The old foreman shuffled his feet. Dick was alert and awake now.

"What for?" he demanded sharply.

"Well—I'll talk straight—it's a land scheme. Me and some friends are takin' land down in the valley. We want water-rights."

The pupils of Dick's blue-gray eyes narrowed as he stared at the man.

"Tell me some more!"

"All right." Linck settled down comfortably. "The railroads are all anxious to fill these Western lands with colonists, see? Me and my friends have got a lot of desert land, right near this water, see? If we get sure title to the water, we can make something, see?"

There was silence. The rain thrummed on the roof. The log in the fireplace crackled and changed position. Dick's watchful eyes kept appraising the man before him. A blue sleeve caught the full glint of the hearth-fire. The sleeve was shoddy.

"Where would you get the money?" inquired Dick.

"Oh, I'll get it, all right! Question is, do you need the money or don't you?"

Dick's reply was cold:

"I need money. But why should you want to buy the whole cañon when you only want water at the mouth?" Dick arose decisively. "Linck, you've been lying to me! What's behind all this? Out with it!"

"What I've told you!" retorted Linck.

"You're lying! Who do you represent? Where do you come from? What's your purpose? Confound it — there's something going on around here—I've felt it—I'm getting my eyes opened—and you're part of it! What's the answer? Tell me! Quit lying!"

"I want the cañon!" said Linck, arising hastily.

"It's not for sale!"

"Well, maybe it'll be for sale sooner than you think!"

Dick whirled on him—

"What do you mean by that?"

There was another strained silence. Linck's eyes looked toward the floor.

"Tell me!" demanded Dick, vehemently. "What's the plot?" His hand caught the slighter man by the collar. "Tell me, or I'll shake it out of you! Your story doesn't hold water! You've lied, lied, lied!"

"Dick!" pleaded old Tom. "Here, boy! You're flyin' off the handle! Remember, this here man's a guest!"

"A guest. Yes. That's right. Excuse me."

Dick sullenly let down his arm.

There was a moment of silence.

Boots thumped hastily on the front porch. They stamped toward the door. The three men faced it. It opened. The firelight disclosed a small figure in a muddy, glistening slicker. His giant mustache was dripping and his eyes were popping. He opened his mouth and bawled—

"Two hundred head o' cattle was drowned at the mouth o' the cañon before we could get 'em out!"

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III

DICK WILLIAMS—puzzled, angry and practically bankrupt—decided to go into Sandstorm next day and lay the matter of the robbery before the authorities. He didn't expect much from that, but he hoped to find some clew to the forces which, he felt, were clutching at him.

Sam Linck was gone; he departed as soon as possible; but the uneasiness caused by his visit remained. And then Dick had a feeling of being spied upon. He felt that some of his troubles came from this tough town. As he rode into its main street late in the afternoon, with its porches occupied by tipsters, look-outs and tin-horn sports, he was doubly convinced.

Dick trotted his horse past an enormous one-story building whose broad windows and doorway disclosed a vast array of polished wood, glittering glass and green tables within. He passed several similar places, smaller but equally well equipped. He struck the commercial district—three stores, a restaurant and a blacksmith shop.

At the end of these buildings, like a barrier blocking the street, stood a long one-story building of adobe brick. Four of its six front windows were high and barred. That was the jail. The other two windows and the door were on the street level. That was the sheriff's office. Dick went there.

The sheriff, Joe Hollister, was a rotund, bald-headed, smooth-shaven hand-shaker in slouchy clothes and pendant suspenders. His grin was as genial as his eyes were cold.

"Dick Williams? Oh, yes; yes. I knew your dad well. Come in behind the rail. Sit down. Have a cigar. You've been a stranger here lately, haven't you? Yeh. Here's a light. What can I do for you?"

"How about that hold-up?"

"Yeh. The hold-up. The stage-driver told me on his return trip."

"Well, what have you done about it?"

"I haven't heard the whole story yet."

Dick gave him the story. The sheriff took voluminous notes.

"Now just wait and I'll have somethin' to report!" promised the sheriff; and Dick had to let it go at that.

He ambled down the line of busy saloons and gambling-houses, whose hitching-racks were fast being occupied by cow-ponies and a few buggies or buckboards. Dusk was coming. Lights began to flicker along the street. Dick, killing time, entered the enormous edifice at the end of the block. It was thronged with men. He shouldered up to a roulette table and watched the colorful wheel as it spun to the tune of the customers' dollars. A hand tapped his shoulder.

Dick turned to look into an enormous flabby face on an enormous flabby body fronted by a bartender's apron. The man's pudgy finger beckoned Dick to follow; and then he turned and entered a doorway which led from behind the great long mahogany bar.

Dick found himself in a well-furnished office. Behind a flat table sat a fine-looking middle-sized man whose coat was off. The man's oily hair was black and neatly parted, matching the luster of his clipped mustache. His eyes were brown, intelligent and piercing. His face was handsome without apparent weaknesses. This was Tim Duncan, owner of the place and master of Sandstorm!

Duncan, with a nod, plunged into his subject immediately—

"Did Sam Linck try to buy your ranch?"

Dick was amazed.

"Why do you ask me that?"

"Is there anything secret about it?"

"No; not exactly."

"All right. Did he?"

"He offered to buy Camesa Cañon," admitted Dick. "What about it?"

"Nothing. I was just curious. That's all. Thanks."

Dick, vaguely ruffled, refused to accept the quick dismissal. He leaned over the table.

"Say, mister, I'm not secretive about my ranch; there's nothing to hide; I'd just as soon tell everybody all about it; but where do you come in?"

The boss smiled. He nodded suavely.

"Right. I'll tell you. You see, I'm running games and things. I like to know when folks have money. It's business. If Linck offered to buy your cañon, that means he has money. See?"

Dick thought it was a cool exposition of the way things were conducted in Sandstorm. It showed that the boss had a keen information department, always working for his own profit. A keen information department! Dick looked straight into the boss's eyes.

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"Funny!" remarked Dick, thoughtfully.

"What is?"

"Nothing. Let it go."

Duncan smiled again, showing regular teeth.

"Were you tempted to sell your cañon to Linck?" he asked.

"Sell, nothing!"

"That's right. I didn't think you would. So that's that. Much obliged for your information."

Dick couldn't find a way to pursue the subject further so he left the office, feeling slightly resentful. He mingled with the crowd and in time he got to the back of the hall, where a big faro game was going on.

Suddenly a loud and raucous voice from near the front door bellowed forth and jolted all coherent thought out of Dick's mind and everybody's else.

Dick turned. He observed that the clarion noise came from a tall, gaunt, hollow-cheeked, black-coated man with a tossing black mane, wide brown eyes and an enormous rotund mouth. He was one of those citizens who look like Abraham Lincoln. The resemblance was striking, apparently heightened purposely; but his manner betrayed neither malice toward none, nor charity for all.

"Ye sinners, publicans and harlots!" he bawled, snarling with contempt. "Ye thieves of the night! Ye imitators of Babylon! Repent before the sword of judgment shall smite thee! Ye thieves! Those among ye have taken my purse! He who steals my purse steals trash and hath sold his birthright for a mess of pottage! Ye sinners, wallowing in the gutter——"

The crowd registered a certain belligerent interest. They formed a ring about the zealot. He glared, wet his wide lips and drew breath for another blast. A citizen beat him to the verbal draw—

"What happened?"

"I have been set upon!" bellowed the zealot. "I came among you in mine innocence and you have taken my purse and script!"

"Somebody done him wrong!" mocked a voice.

Everybody laughed. Dick, recognizing the zealot as a resident of the hills behind Spring Garden, edged into the crowd around the gaunt man, whose mouth opened again.

"Jeer!" he raged. "Jeer at the stranger who is robbed; you with your gaming, your bedizened huzzies, your drink, your ways of damnation! Jeer! But verily I say unto you, your sins——!!

"Shut up!" bawled an equally loud voice. "Get outa here!"

It was the fat bartender. He was advancing with a bung-starter in hand. The crowd began to protest. A short, stocky, round-faced man, a rider of the range to all appearances, went alongside the gaunt zealot.

"Give him a chance! Let's hear him out! Maybe he's got a good show to give us. Let's do things *right!*"

Dick stiffened. He had heard those words before—

"Do things *right!*"

In a flash his mind returned to the road to Spring Garden—the stage, the white rocks, the dry-wash, and the brown eyes which had stared into his. He remembered an agile, cocksure young fellow with a round face; and here he was!

The man was almost alongside Dick. He turned. Eye met eye for one brief second. Dick reached back. He wasn't guessing now; he knew! He yanked out his short-barreled six-shooter before the man could collect his wits, and laid the ugly muzzle against his stomach.

"What's this?" yelped the man, sticking up his hands.

"It's a jail," said Dick, evenly. "Now maybe I'll find what happened to my seven thousand dollars!"

IV

THOUGH Dick might have expected opposition from the crowd because of his somewhat dramatic act, he was totally unprepared for the mass of obstacles which he encountered within the next hour. The man was disarmed silently. He seemed to be quite indifferent about it. Nobody raised a hand to help him, but moral support was given him in amazing measure.

The fat bartender was first to argue.

"Lay off this!" he advised Dick. "Let him alone, mister! I'll vouch for him!"

"That's not enough!" snapped Dick.

"Aw, wadda you want? Can't you take a tip?"

"We'll go to the sheriff's office."

"All right, you stubborn darned fool, go to the sheriff, then!"

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The bartender made a gesture of rejection.

Dick went to the sheriff. Half the crowd followed. Dick shoved his captive into the railed office, illumined by two lamps on the whitewashed walls, and passed the railing while the crowd remained on the other side. The sheriff looked confounded.

"What's this?" he inquired.

"This is the leader of the crowd that held up the Spring Garden stage!" announced Dick.

"Aw—rats! Got any proof?"

"I identify him. Positively."

The sheriff's little eyes peered at Dick and then at the prisoner. The latter seemed unconcerned. He lighted a cigaret, jiggled slightly on the toes of his high-heeled boots, and examined a picture on the wall—a fly-specked chromo of George Washington, as it happened.

The sheriff, whose brow creased with painful thought, finally beckoned Dick into a side-room. Dick demurred.

"Do you want him to escape?" he inquired.

"Aw, he'll stand. The crowd'll see to that!"

The sheriff nodded and grinned to friends.

"Come on inside!" he invited Dick.

Dick finally agreed. He found himself in a stuffy room with three chairs and a desk, sort of a cubby-hole where prisoners were sometimes interviewed. The sheriff lighted a lamp and shut the door. Then he sat down, with Dick, and put an earnest hand on the younger man's knee.

"Listen. You're on the wrong track, boy. You're makin' enemies. This fellow, Jerry Daley, is pretty prominent around here. You'd better forget this business."

There was silence for a moment. Then Dick looked straight at the sheriff. Dick could seem amazingly innocent at times, and now his face was almost cherubic.

"Do—do you think I ought to apologize to him?" he inquired, earnestly.

"Heh. Hum. Well, of course that's up to you. If you think it best——"

Dick's voice became cold.

"I don't! I came here to get action! This man robbed me. He stuck me up at the point of a gun. Now, what are you going to do about it?"

"Have you got proof?" inquired the sheriff, with some heat. "Got witnesses and dates and everything? No. You only *think* you reckernize him! Huh! Boy, boy, boy, go back to your ranch! You're gettin' yourself into a heap of trouble!"

"How? Is this little runt above the law?"

The sheriff mopped his bald forehead desperately.

"No; he ain't above the law; but—well—you might say he's sort of *alongside* it!"

"Just what do you mean by that?"

"Well, he's Tim Duncan's right-hand man! See?"

"Oh!"

Dick jumped up.

"I'm beginning to see light!" he yelled. "So *that's* it! So Duncan's right-hand man knew about my business and robbed me of my money! And tonight Duncan wanted to know about my business with another man! A gambler with robbery on the side! A fine citizen—a civic leader—what a buzzard-roost!"

"What are you talkin' about?" demanded the sheriff.

"Robbery. Here. You put this man, Jerry Daley, behind the bars! I'll swear out a warrant! We might as well fight this thing. If you don't care to do your duty, say so, and we'll have it out right now!"

"You stubborn idiot!" exploded the sheriff, irascibly. "Can't you take a hint?"

"No. I'll swear out the warrant!"

"All right," sighed the sheriff. "But, remember, I warned you!"

He opened the door slowly and stepped to the outer room, where the prisoner was chatting with the crowd. The prisoner might have secured guns enough from his friends to kill a dozen sheriffs; but things weren't being done that way tonight.

The sheriff addressed the prisoner kindly:

"This here witness says he'll stand behind a warrant. I gotta arrest you. Sorry, Jerry!"

"Uh-huh," grunted Jerry, indifferently, casting an appraising glance at Dick; but a friend of the prisoner was not so docile.

"You're steppin' into somethin', mister!" he informed Dick.

"It seems so!"

"Oh. You're one of these here reform boys! Yeh. I got you right. Well, we've had 'em before!"

"Yes; and you'll have 'em again. You fools are making them!"

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There was no immediate reply to this and Dick routed out a querulous justice of the peace—the town barber—and a warrant was signed. When Dick returned to the long adobe office and jail, the crowd had thinned. He concluded his business and saw the prisoner locked up—pending the arrival of bail—and finally fared forth into the dirt street.

The windows of the big establishments threw illumination on the roadway, making it a network of lights and shadows. Several varieties of dance-hall music blended in a medley of incongruous sounds. Otherwise there was peace.

"Babylon!" came a raucous voice alongside Dick's right ear as he started on his way to a lodging-house on the other side of town. "Babylon! Their ways are the ways of sin; they fill their swinish skins with the juice of the grape; but the handwriting is on the wall, brother!"

Dick found the tall, frock-coated zealot keeping step with him. The zealot, forgotten for the time, had watched the whole proceeding in the sheriff's office, and now he was giving his comments. But Dick snickered. Babylon? This little cowtown under the Western stars? Shucks!

"You laugh, but sin is sin!" rebuked the zealot, oratorically. "Beware of them! There is more evil here than the mind of man knoweth. The wrath of God shall surely punish them!"

The gaunt man pronounced the name of the Creator with explosive gusto, there being a sort of shotgun effect on the initial G.

"I don't know," admitted Dick.

"What don't you know?" demanded the zealot, tersely.

"I'm not so sure about telling God what to do in this matter."

There was a long, strained silence. They strode along board porches and sidewalks, unmolested and apparently unnoticed, though many loungers were on the walks. The zealot opened his cavernous mouth once or twice to speak, but his teeth clicked shut. Apparently he was thinking hard. The pair reached the blaring resort at the end of the street and turned into a dark alley which ran between two fences.

There were tin cans and weeds in the alley. A cat streaked across their path. A man was walking just ahead of them, whistling softly. Dick, because of recent happenings, rather mistrusted this navigation of a dark alley; but he sensed that the retribution of the Jerry Daley crowd was not yet organized, even if it were not all talk.

The zealot's voice resumed, flinty but somewhat reproachful.

"I have been thinking over what you said, brother! I have searched my soul lest I have sinned without thought, using the name of the Creator in vain——"

"For heaven's sake!" gasped Dick.

"—but I find no sin. I have only used the words of the Blessed Book wherein it says that he who mocks the ways of righteousness shall be visited with the wrath——"

Bang! A line of flame lashed out from the right-hand fence, a flash out of the darkness.

Dick stopped. He reached backward. But the shot was not aimed at him. Another flash licked out from the fence. It went forward, toward the man walking ahead! He seemed to wobble. He swayed and then his vague form hit the opposite fence with a thud. There was a thump and a muffled rattle of pebbles, and that was all.

The zealot, with a cry, started forward. Dick held him. In that instant of silence Dick heard the patter of running feet beyond the fence. The footsteps grew dimmer, struck boards, raced across them, and subsided.

"Sneaky!" grunted Dick.

"Assassination!" bawled the zealot. "Murder! Another crime!"

The zealot ran forward. So did Dick. He reached the victim, knelt over the warm body, and felt for the heart. There was no apparent movement.

The zealot struck a match. Its blue glare illumined a huddled figure which lay face upward, with legs queerly distorted. The light glinted on a somber ribbon of red which flowed under the man's forehead. The man's face was thin. His nose was hooked. Dick, shocked, laid the body down, and arose.

He felt that this thing had come very close to him—very close!

"That's Sam Linck," he announced, in an awed voice. "Sam Linck—the man who tried to buy my cañon!"

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V

DICK, somewhat bewildered, went back to his ranch next morning. He left many matters unsolved, including the killing of Linck which he refrained from probing too closely.

Dick's hasty exit was caused by suspicion that the murder of Linck might be pinned on him, in retaliation for the jailing of Jerry Daley; and while this didn't happen, he realized his utter helplessness against the organized crowd in Sandstorm; so he went while the going was good, though he had desired to confront Tim Duncan and ask pointed questions. As for Daley, he was out on bail. His case was due to be heard before the justice in a short time.

Dick was not satisfied with his visit to Sandstorm.

"I can't make head or tail of all these happenings," he confessed to Tom, in the comfortable, old, blue-carpeted living-room of the ranch-house next day. "I feel we're the object of an invisible attack. But why? What have we done?"

Old Tom was changing his foot-gear, using a bootjack.

"How are we gonna pull out of it?" he inquired.

Petey was standing around, his eyes popping from behind his bristling mustache as he stared from one boss to the other.

"We'll have to borrow some money!" he blurted.

Old Tom, glaring, arose to his stockinged feet.

"Oh, *we* will?" he bawled. "Who told you to horn in, hey? What are you doin' here? Didn't I send you to Sandstorm two hours ago with a list of stuff to get? Hey? What are you doin' here?"

"I—I wanted to make sure you hadn't forgotten anything, like you usually do——"

Tom reached down and lifted the bootjack.

"Get on your way or I'll scramble your fool brains worse than they're scrambled already!"

Petey clattered out through the door. Old Tom laid down the bootjack.

"Ought to fire him!" growled Tom. "Ought to have fired him years ago!"

"Oh, he doesn't mean anything," said Dick, absently.

"No!" snorted Tom. "His whole life doesn't mean anything! When it comes to meanin' anything, he's just like a cipher! Huh! The wuthless, good-for-nothin' little idiot, if he hadn't been one of your daddy's men long years ago, I'd knock out his brains and use 'em in the garden, along with the rest of the fertilizer! We'll have to borrow some money! Huh!"

"No," said Dick, seriously. "We'd better sell some cattle. About two hundred head."

"And then what?"

"If we can't struggle through, sell some more; and so on to the end."

"The end! We've reached it! Huh! Boy, this was once a cattle ranch!"

BUT Dick, Tom and Petey started out during the next week to select their two hundred from the animals scattered in the brush in the great pasture below the mouth of Camesa Cañon. They rode by a tortuous path along the great, winding gulch toward the lower country, first passing pines and firs, then bare rock, then bottom land.

The stream rolled along decorously in its channel as if nothing had ever happened; but on either side of the course were streaky sand-bars, small tree-trunks, and wet bushes turned upside down. In some places were little oozy lakes which reflected the blue of the sky.

Far down on the flat valley, Dick could see buzzards swooping down; scores of them; all coming to the feast which lay in the lower lands in front of the cañon's mouth. In time he came to a steer's bloated carcass; and then some more. Arriving buzzards flew over the high yellow bluffs which bounded the west side of the flat lands, winging above the roofs of the White Rose mine and mill, which clung to the bluff. Guests never ceased coming.

Suddenly the whole banqueting flock in the lower lands arose.

"Somebody's fooling around!" observed Dick.

"Let 'em!" grunted old Tom. "We're busy!"

They went through the brush and into the lower lands, collecting strays here and there. The cattle were grazing all over the place. Dick chased a couple of white-faced scrubs around a clump of manzanita. Suddenly four men leaped on horses, just over a little rise, and dashed away.

"Hey!" yelled Dick.

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But there was no answer.

He was more puzzled than ever. He had the uncomfortable feeling that he was still under surveillance. He mentioned the matter to Tom, but later they all forgot about it while they collected their scattered animals and herded them under the bluff for the night, alongside a spring near the mine. Then they rolled in their blankets, under the stars.

Sometimes during the night Dick thought he saw faint flickering lights in the near-by flat lands. As the winds whimpered through the tops of bushes he caught dim glints at different places—here, there, yonder—as if folks were smoking.

"Something's up!" blurted Dick. "They're not watching us for nothing!"

"What's up?"

"I don't know! Confound it, I don't know!"

Old Tom lighted his pipe while one of the Camesa riders galloped past as he circled the edges of the herd. Tom seemed to watch the rider's silhouette, looming up in front of the masses of cattle. Tom's voice was uncertain—

"We haven't got any enemies that we know about, have we?"

"None that we know about. That's the trouble. If somebody was to stand up and call himself an enemy, I'd be tickled to death! I'd know how to act! But now—well, I'm just nervous!"

Old Tom, with the glow of his pipe reflecting on his wrinkled face, stared up at the Milky Way.

"It may all be coincidence," he guessed. "The robbery and all the rest of it, includin' these here four men today. Mebbe they're runnin' from the sheriff and didn't want to be seen."

"Coincidence!" mused Dick, thoughtfully.

"Well, there wasn't anybody could pull a cloudburst down on your head!"

"Maybe not. It may all be coincidence, as you say; but you keep a sharp eye on that herd when you go to the railroad, or there may be another coincidence!"

"Yeh," agreed Tom. "I'm likely to!"

Tom started his herd off next morning toward the railroad and the markets. Dick saw Tom and two riders well on their way, and then he and Petey turned back for the long ride toward home. It was not necessary to keep close watch on the remaining cattle, scattered far and wide in the valley. The cattle stayed near the water-holes. There were no other brands in this country, anyhow. Two riders were enough to patrol the whole grazing land.

Dick and Petey swung into the higher lands near the cañon's mouth and rode upstream, past the mines on the yellow western bluffs. They began to ascend the first steep hill which led to the ranch-house and the mountains. A ledge of rocks and a few scrub oaks masked the plain from their view.

Suddenly a shot sounded behind them, a muffled crack, hardly discernible to the ear.

Dick heard it only subconsciously.

Then came a second shot, and a third.

Dick reined in. He turned his horse and rode to where he could see over the tops of trees and bushes into the sunny plain. Petey, wondering, followed him.

Far down among the brush they saw a reddish steer running. A horseman galloped behind it and fired at it. The steer dropped. Other horsemen were running about the brush in the further distance, deliberately shooting into Dick's cattle!

"Come on!" yelled Dick, mad with anger, yanking out the short-barreled revolver. "It's wanton destruction! It's a plot! They're killing cattle! Maybe there'll be somebody else killed!"

"Yeh," gulped Petey. "Maybe!"

But he followed his master and raced down the rocks and into the valley.

They galloped down hill, dashed to the level lands, forded the creek, and rushed upon two men on black horses who saw them and retreated. Dick tried to catch up with them, without success.

All the intruders had seemed to take alarm at once. Dick kept up the chase, galloping his bay horse to the limit; but old Tom had taken the best animals and Dick was handicapped. In time he was forced to quit. He sorrowfully rejoined Petey near a clump of chaparral.

Petey was examining the body of a steer. It was bleeding at the mouth and its tongue was hanging out.

"Shot behind the ear!" announced Petey.

"What does it mean?" demanded Dick, savagely. "What's the answer? Somebody is trying to strip me—ruin me—starve me! Why—why—why?"

"I dunno," said Petey.

A movement to the eastward caught the eye. A scarecrow, afoot, was lurching

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among the bushes, coming toward Dick. The hatless, coatless scarecrow waved. Dick galloped toward him and recognized one Townsend, a rider in the outfit.

Townsend was walking ungracefully across the sands and earth because of his high-heeled boots, but this was only part of his troubles. Closer inspection proved that his sandy face was lacerated and his right eye was almost blue.

"They beat me up!" explained Townsend. "They jumped the cattle and shot into 'em, I was away from my horse, over by a spring. My rifle was on the saddle. Before I could reach it, they jumped me. I tried to put up a fight but there was too many!"

"Who were they?" snapped Dick.

"I don't know. That's the dog-goned trouble. Just a gang. I thought I reckernized one or two, but I'm not sure. They got to me before I was ready!"

Dick sat like a man frozen in his saddle, and stared absently past his employe. He knew that many of his cattle were gone. Wantonly, deliberately destroyed. He had heard of sheep being butchered that way; such things had happened in the vicious sheep-and-cattle wars of the Western ranges; but cattle? It was incredible!

"How many have we lost?" he wondered.

"I dunno," said Townsend. "They couldn't have shot very many. Still, I dunno. They've been busy mighty near an hour, running around through the brush. There must have been a dozen of 'em."

"I see," said Dick, nodding grimly. "It's all part of the plot. They've spied on me, trailed me, trapped me. They've known every move I've made. It's all part of a cold-blooded, systematic plan. They've had plenty of information and somebody on the ranch has given it to them!"

Petey, standing by the dead steer, turned white. His mouth opened. His eyes began to pop and his mouth made queer gurgling noises.

"Why—why—I wonder——"

"What?" demanded Dick.

"I—I was just thinkin'. It may have been accident, sort of."

"Go on!"

"You see—well—every time I've went to town, folks have asked me all about the gossip of this here ranch; and so—well—I told 'em. I wonder if that had anything to do with it?"

Dick sat back and stared. His hand clutched the horn of his saddle convulsively; and then, with a certain grim slowness, he dismounted and bore down upon his pop-eyed employe.

VI

NEVER in all his life did Petey exude so much information as in the next five minutes. The outraged Dick grabbed him by the collar, and Petey was shaken, jarred, jolted and bounced while facts whirled out of him like sparks from a pinwheel.

Petey had furnished the enemy with complete data on Dick and his ranch affairs. He met them whenever he went to town. They seemed like pretty good fellas and they treated him fine. Yeh. They told him he was a fine fella. Yeh, they asked him a lot of questions, but he didn't see any reason to lie about anything, so he told 'em the truth. Why should he lie about anything? There wasn't anything to hide, was there?

Dick, remembering his own frankness recently, began to feel ashamed. He released his hold on Petey's rumpled shirt.

"Where were these pumping-parties held?"

"In the Golden Star."

The Golden Star was the resort owned by Tim Duncan, the handsome boss of Sandstorm!

"Did Duncan ever question you?" inquired Dick.

"Him? No. Just a lot o' fellas. I forget who."

"You'll remember shortly!" promised Dick. "Let's go home!"

Dick took the dazed Petey to the ranch-house. He might have discharged Petey, but the latter was a family heirloom, and besides, he had furnished a sure clue to the persecutors of Dick. But why should Duncan plot against him? Dick could only suspect.

He decided to have it out with Tim Duncan.

Ignoring the danger of going to town again, he grimly buckled on a frontier .45, saddled a fresh horse, and took the wagon-road which led to Spring Garden and thence to Sandstorm.

Next morning, quite late, Dick found the boss of Sandstorm in the side room which he used as office, a place rather

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elaborately furnished and showing a few handsome landscapes on the walls, alongside cheap pictures of actresses and prize-fighters, culled from a pink sporting paper.

When Dick entered, the pliant hands of Duncan were fingering a tiny canvas in a gold frame on a table. Duncan was seated behind it. His intelligent eyes looked up, noted the blond visitor, and then returned to the trinket in front of him.

"Beautiful thing," he remarked, in a low and musical voice. "I just got it by mail. Sit down."

Dick eyed the boss of Sandstorm curiously. The leader of such a place ought to be a two-fisted, slam-bang, —— roaring brawler with a six-shooter in one hand and a bung-starter in the other. Instead, he was holding a dainty oil-painting in his well-manicured fingers, and talking about beauty!

And then Dick met his eyes. They were brown with a glint of green, slightly almond-shaped, very calm, very direct, and betraying calm assurance of mastery.

But Dick wanted to start something. He slammed his broad-brimmed hat on the table.

"I was wondering how you got that picture," he remarked. "Did the dealer get slugged, or was it plain murder?"

Duncan's eyes widened, but he smiled, showing beautiful teeth under the black mustache.

"Oh."

He opened a drawer and tossed the picture inside.

"I murdered him, I guess; I've forgotten."

He sat back in his chair.

"By the way, I'm glad you've come. I wanted to have a talk with you. I understand you're a friend of Ellen Grimshaw, the daughter of Ezra Grimshaw, that lanky gospel-sharp who lives in Judge Pryor's old house behind Spring Garden. Are you interested there at all?"

"What of it?" asked Dick, blankly.

"I just asked because—well—I think she's a fine girl. No disrespect intended."

"That's nice of you. Still, I've seen enough girls in your dance-hall, yonder, to keep you interested!"

"I'm not chained down to this place!" snapped Duncan, with a trace of asperity. "I go where I please!"

"Yes; within limitations!"

Dick swiftly changed the subject.

"By the way, you seem to like my ranch a good deal, I've noticed!"

"I?"

"Yes, you!"

Dick flared up.

"You and your gang have spied on me, robbed me, killed my cattle, and tried to ruin me! What's the answer? Talk up!"

"Why, I don't know anything about your ranch!"

Dick stiffened. For a moment he wondered. Was it possible that the boss of Sandstorm didn't know what was going on, despite his control over his gang and despite the reliable spying system which he boasted about? Impossible! This man knew everything! Dick leaned over the table. His answer was deliberate—

"*You lie!*"

Duncan's eyes flashed with a queer green flame. He almost arose from his chair. There was an electrical silence. Then Duncan subsided. His face looked irritated and he snapped a finger. His reply was quiet, low-toned, amazing:

"Yes. You are right. I lied."

"What?" gasped Dick.

"Yes. I was foolish enough to lie to you. It's a cowardly habit. Folks get into it without thinking. It lays them open to insult. I'm not angry at you; I'm angry at myself. Lying means fear. I've no reason to fear you or any one else. To tell you the truth, I want your cañon and its water rights."

"Oh, you do!"

Dick's tone tried to be biting but it sounded vague and distant.

"Yes. So I went after it in the manner that seemed to bring the best results." The boss sat back in his chair. "You're known as stubborn. Ordinary methods wouldn't do; so some of my friends decided to make you listen to reason. Not me. I didn't have a hand in it. I only told them to use their own judgments!"

The boss was partly amused and partly contemptuous. Dick guessed there was a revolver in that partly-opened top drawer, or else the boss of Sandstorm placed a low estimate on Dick's indignation. Duncan seemed entirely calm. He continued:

"I heard that some of them decided to catch you on the Spring Garden stage and get the best of you; but I'm not sure of that. Fact is, I didn't try to learn. The less I knew, the better!"

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Dick sat down slowly. The bland effrontery of it was almost too much. He had heard of crooks and plotters, but the man across the table beat them all. He was a gentleman unafraid. Dick felt his temper surging up, but he choked it down.

"You've got the nerve to sit here and tell me this?" he gasped.

"Why, I don't know anything about this, personally. I couldn't name names if I wanted to. See? I'm just trying to piece the thing together for you."

"Go on," said Dick, in a throaty voice.

"Well, are you ready to sell your ranch?"

Dick, with mighty self-control, held his temper.

"No."

"I thought not. Sam Linck proved that."

"Why was Linck killed?" demanded Dick.

"Oh. That." Duncan started drumming on the desk. "That was too bad. From what I learn——"

"From what you learn!"

"Say—I'm not lying to you! Stop that! I tell you, I'm out of all this! From what I learn, Linck tried to get ahead of his pals. He went to your place and tried to deal with you direct. Maybe he had his own plans. His pals found it out. They asked me about it, but I didn't know he'd double-crossed them till I learned it from you!"

"And then your friends learned it!" added Dick.

"Yes. And I'm afraid they went a little too far."

"How far will they go with me?" inquired Dick, quietly.

"That's according. But I guess you'll sell Camesa Cañon soon, anyhow."

"To *you?*"

"You can't hold on. You haven't got enough money. You'll sell to me because there's nobody else to sell to!"

Dick felt hot blood surging through his veins but he managed to control himself, partly because of the engaging fearlessness of the man opposite him, though Duncan's very indifference was putting him off his guard.

Dick stared at the shining top of the table. He knew his own valuation in this man's eyes now. He knew he seemed like a stubborn, but rather helpless, young cowman in top-boots and faded store clothes, somewhat slow-witted and not at all dangerous, a facile butt for Duncan to visit his contempt upon. Duncan's contempt had grown throughout the interview, inspired, no doubt, by the boss's irritation at catching himself in a lie!

Dick was not playing a part. He was as slow as he looked; but only because he was studying.

"And suppose I hang on to the very end?" he inquired.

"You can't last. You'll be sold for taxes. I'll get it anyhow!"

"Suppose I fight you and your whole gang?"

"You can't. I've got the power. All the power there is in this county!"

Dick kept looking at the table-top.

"I see. I see. And so, you've smashed me. What do you want to do with my ranch?"

"That's my business."

"Why didn't you come with a fair offer of purchase before you stripped me?"

"You wouldn't have sold. You're stubborn. And I haven't stripped you, young fellow! That's hearsay!"

"Yes. I understand. You're safe before the courts! Safe everywhere! You've got the power! Is there no justice in this country?"

"Justice?" The handsome boss of Sandstorm lighted a cigaret and gracefully flicked the match into a cuspidor. "Justice is what you're able to get! If a man can't get it, he's out of luck!" Duncan blew a smoke-ring. "I happen to have power in this county. I can get justice. You can't. That's tough luck for you!"

Dick Williams leaped over the table and crashed straight into him!

Dick's chair slammed backwards. The table danced on two legs. Dick—insulted, resentful, savage—flailed his fists and boots madly as his big body lunged over the table. He knocked Duncan backward. He grabbed the man by the throat and smashed straight into the handsome nose!

"Justice!" roared Dick, wildly. "Let's have some now!"

They rolled together on the floor. They thumped into the partition. Duncan tried to grab the butt of Dick's pendant six-shooter. Dick tore his hands away. He had forgotten the gun. Now he grabbed the butt and pulled it away from Duncan. The table overturned on them.

"Hey!" bawled a voice from outside.

The door banged open. The fat bartender poked his head in. Others were behind him.

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"Get this fellow!" snarled Duncan.

Dick jumped up, shoving the table off his shoulders. He whirled upon the newcomers. The pistol-barrel turned in their direction, but only for a second. He whirled again. Tim Duncan, with his eyes malevolent and his mouth bleeding and spitting profanity, was reaching into the half-opened drawer of the desk. Dick pointed the pistol-muzzle toward him again.

"Drop it!" ordered Dick, reaching over and yanking the revolver from the drawer. "I'm just giving you a little justice!"

"I'll give you plenty!" snarled the boss.

But the men at the door were taking hesitant steps forward. Dick turned and covered them.

"Back up!" he yelled. "Back up! Get away from there!"

The newcomers, slow-witted, didn't quite make up their minds to act until they were confronted by a wild-eyed, rampaging blond berserk with a six-shooter in his hand. Then they backed up hastily.

Dick plunged through them. He leaped into the main saloon, still holding the pistol, and raced through the doorway to where his horse was tethered at the hitching-rack. He untied the hackamore. He jumped on, and turned the horse just as Duncan's voice bawled from the doorway:

"There he goes! Get him!"

A shot exploded at the doorway. Dick, bending low in the saddle, fired back as he dug the spurs into the animal's flank. A crowd of men at the saloon-entrance disintegrated.

A shot came from a window.

Dick turned a corner just as a bullet whistled past his head, and then, savage but helpless, he straightened out on the long road that led to home.

VII

DICK galloped across the yellow flat plains, traveling directly toward his ranch and ignoring the better road which led to Spring Garden mesa. Occasionally he looked behind, expecting some sort of pursuit, for he knew he had committed a dangerous act of lese-majeste in handling the sacred person of the boss of Sandstorm. Once, when on a rise, he thought he saw figures and dust-clouds near the tiny collection of buildings which was Sandstorm; but by this time his lead was too great to overcome.

He traveled steadily ahead, over rises and sand-dunes and through the broad pastures at the mouth of Camesa Cañon, reaching the ranch-house late in the afternoon.

Petey was eating an extra meal in the big, old dining-room, a tiny figure at the end of a vast oilcloth-covered table. He jumped up when his employer stormed in.

"Listen!" ordered Dick, without prelude. "You haven't seen me, see? I'm going up to the old abandoned mine-shanty, up by Clear Springs. When Tom returns, send him there!"

Petey blinked.

"I haven't seen you?" he inquired, unsteadily. "Why—gosh—what's it all about?"

"War. Massacre. Vengeance. Anything I can get! Shut up and do what I say! They're on my trail! I've hurt Tim Duncan. They'll probably try to arrest me for assault, or something. Then they'll have me where they want me. I'm going!"

"But, gosh, there's courts, ain't there?"

Dick was about to say something impatient, but checked himself.

"Courts? Not yet! Justice, Petey, means what you can get! I'm going to study how to get it! Send Tom!"

Dick left Petey abruptly. He chose a fresh horse, some blankets, flour, bacon, beans, coffee, a rifle, a six-shooter and a fishing-rod, and soon rode along quiet and long-abandoned backtrails through the pines to where an isolated old tumble-down shanty stood amid the trees and rock-ledges in the higher mountains. Alongside it were tall firs, standing like masts against the sky. Beneath it was a spring and a small silvery mountain stream full of ripples and cascades and deep, green pools. Beyond it was a tumbled vista of rocks and boulders and a few trees, stretching to the bases of gaunt ridges a mile away. The air was clear and cool. A few tiny patches of snow still shone in the crevices of the highest rocks. Dick's cabin was almost the top of the local world.

Old Tom rode up in four days. Dick, with a string of fish, met him at the doorway.

"What luck?" asked the eager Dick.

"Luck?" Tom dismounted with a jingle of spurs. "No luck! You're hidin' up here, the sheriff's tryin' to arrest you, our cattle's been shot, and I got held-up by a lot of

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bum robbers on my way back from the railroad!"

"Held-up!"

"Yeh. Three of 'em. Said they was road-agents. They got mad when I didn't believe 'em; so finally I gave in, just to be sociable. They looked like cheap town-sports."

"Another hold-up!" Bitterly. "It's part of the general scheme. How much did they get?"

"Nothin'. I was paid by a draft on a bank, so I left the money there. We can pay our bills with checks. It's a new idea here, but it *can* be done, considerin' everything! Them robbers, now, they've got a passel o' blank checks! I hope they enjoy 'em!"

Dick laughed. It was the first time in weeks.

"There's plenty more check-books!" he observed. "Maybe our luck's changing!"

"Huh! We need it!"

Tom peered into the half-darkened shanty, with its cot, table, rusty stove and rumpled bedding.

"They've made you hide like a hunted bobcat because you've rumpled up the town's boss scallywag!" commented old Tom. "Fine state of affairs!

"So you've heard about it!"

"Sure. They're campin' at the ranch-house now, waitin' for you!"

"Who?"

"The posse. Guns, rifles, hosses, pack-mules and I dunno what-all. Sort of a cavalry troop, only not so decent. Jerry Daley, that sassy little bandit with the moon face, he said——"

"I thought he was under arrest!"

"He was, but he ain't. The case came up, but there wasn't nobody to testify against him, so they let him loose, real polite. Now he's one of the posse and plumb belligerent for law and order. He says you busted the law scandalous. Tim Duncan swore out a warrant chargin' you with assault, battery, mayhem, attempted murder, petty larceny——"

"Larceny?"

"Yeh. While you was rompin' away from Tim's saloon, somebody got into the cash-till."

"That's insult! Anything else?"

"No. That's all. The posse's makin' themselves to home. I've told the Chink to cook as bad as he knows how, which is some horrible; but the posse don't take the hint. So today I got away from 'em and came up here. I'll have to start right back."

Neither of them yet spoke of what was really in their minds—the possibility of surrendering the ranch. They didn't have the heart to discuss such a happening. Not till they came to the last ditch!

Dick walked back to the bunk inside the darkened cabin and sat down, crossing his booted legs. He lighted his pipe. The light emphasized new lines about his mouth and eyes as he looked at the mustached, leather-necked old cattleman who was his father's friend before him.

"Tom," blurted Dick, "this is all a skin game! A put-up job to get my ranch! I've heard it from the lips of Duncan himself! Maybe he's got a land-scheme in the back of his head. I don't know what it is. Anyhow he's got us two ways. If we refuse to sell to him directly, he'll have us sold for taxes. He has the power to do it. In other words, he's got us!"

Tom sat on the rickety, dusty table, shoving aside a candle, a book and a can of tomatoes. His old eyes tried to follow the track of a beetle on the floor; but the beetle seemed blurred.

In all his years with the once proud Camesa ranch — through rain and shine, good luck and bad—he had never pictured such an ending as this! It was sort of a rat-hole death. It made him quail inwardly. His mind frantically sought a way out. He reached over and touched Dick's knee.

"Boy," said Tom, in a husky voice. "I've been sort of a father to you, ain't I?"

"You have," agreed Dick.

"I've always told you to live square, haven't I?"

"You have."

"I've never put a wrong idea into your head, have I? I've always stood for honesty and friendship, haven't I?"

"Yes."

"All right; let's turn bandit!"

"What?"

Dick stiffened. He stared curiously at the earnest old cattleman. Tom commenced pacing up and down on the creaking floor, twisting his gnarled hands behind him. His voice was exasperated:

"They've made you an outlaw—hidin' in the mountains—runnin' from a posse—avoidin' arrest—what for? Because you've tried to hold what's legally yours!"

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"Yes. That's right."

"All right. Give 'em their own medicine! Tear into 'em! They've made you an outlaw; now do a good job! Look at your chances! Duncan owns the express company; the gamblin' house; the freight-line to the Welland mines and the railroad; the Sandstorm Mercantile Company——"

"But ——"

"But, nothing!" roared Tom. "They've shoved you into a corner; now fight back! In my day, a man would have taken a shotgun and cleaned out the whole mess!"

Dick laughed.

"I'd only put myself in the wrong!"

"Yeh! You've been put there already! But if you start after this here gang, you'll get sympathy from half the county!"

"You believe that?"

"Sure. This gang's made enemies. They've been on the job a long time. Folks are gettin' a bit restless!"

Dick arose. His voice was strangely hearty.

"Tom, I'm glad to hear you say that! It chimes in with my own belief——"

There was a shadow at the door. Tom and Dick turned, startled.

A long, blue-barreled revolver was poked into the room; and behind it marched Joe Hollister, the rotund, bald-headed sheriff of the county!

"Easy, now!" advised Hollister, stepping into the shanty cautiously and pointing the muzzle almost into Dick's face. "You're under arrest, see? I've gotcha. Better take it mild; then there won't be any accidents!"

Dick was almost paralyzed by this quick ending to all his hopes and plans. He glared over the menacing revolver.

"What am I arrested for?" he demanded.

"Oh, lots of things. Mostly tryin' to kill Mr. Duncan."

"How did you get here?"

"Oh, I followed your foreman. I happened to see him leave the ranch house. He thought I was asleep!"

"Oh, I see!" Dick's blue eyes blazed. "You're swift to avenge Duncan, all right! I see that! But when Duncan's right-hand man got into trouble, I notice you were a lot slower!"

The sheriff was a choleric man beneath his outward joviality. His face reddened.

"Yes? Well, I arrested Jerry Daley and I'm arrestin' you! Tell it to the judge! Come on—grab your duds and travel. My men are comin' up the trail behind me, as soon as they catch my tracks!"

The sheriff was no longer the smooth, ingratiating politician at the county jail. The sheriff was so different that Dick saw red.

A sense of injustice smote him—a smarting injustice that made him wonder how to evade this one-sided upholder of the Law. Instantly he remembered an old trick. He tried a bit of play-acting. He looked past the sheriff's shoulder and backed away slightly. His eyes rounded. His mouth opened. The sheriff, though still vigilant, started to turn his head to see what was coming behind him.

Dick ducked low, reached up, deflected the sheriff's pistol-arm, and grabbed that official's collar with the disengaged left hand.

The gun exploded. A cloud of acrid smoke blurred the dark cabin. Old Tom, a shadow in the smoke, leaped forward to take a hand, but a nod and a frown from Dick turned him away. He jumped toward the door and peered out.

Dick wrenched the gun out of the sheriff's hand. The officer was fat and out of condition. Dick was stronger. The gun fell to the ground. Dick hurled the officer sidewise and then shoved him to the bed, while Tom, at the doorway, stood ready to take a hand or to warn Dick in case the sheriff's friends arrived.

"Hey!" yelled the outraged official.

"You'll not make a victim of me!" yelled Dick, grabbing the man by the throat and bouncing him on the bed. "You'll not keep me in jail while your boss plays with my ranch! Not quite yet! Arrest? Huh!"

Dick, as if to atone for some of his recent sufferings, gave the sheriff a thorough jolting. He slammed the stout official around so vehemently that the aged bed creaked, rattled, squeaked, and finally gave way. The sheriff fell through and laid in a crater of blankets.

"You're an outlaw!" screamed the purple-faced sheriff, between gasps. "An outlaw!"

He shook a weak fist but observed the look in Dick's eyes. "You ain't legal!" he amended. "Now you're in worse trouble!"

"Legal?" panted Dick. "No! But I'm going to be!"

Something in his voice made Tom turn and stare.

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"The law's pointed against me; so is the judge; all right; we'll leave it that way!" announced Dick, hotly. "I can't run a power-plant; I can't run a ranch. All right. I'll turn politician!" He laughed bitterly. "Let's be legal. Let's have a new sheriff and a new judge and a new county! We need the power to do it. We need the salaries to live on! Tom, you've shown the way. Half the county will be with me! I'll keep up the fight if I have to hide like a hunted wolf through the August primaries and November elections! I'll be a new sort of bandit! I'm going gunning for votes!"

"Crazy!" exclaimed old Tom. "Plumb crazy!"

"No! We need a new sheriff! This—" Dick pointed to the open-mouthed figure on the bed—"this sort of trash has to go! We'll try it out. Let's fight! Tom, you're going to be the next sheriff of this county!"

"No!" yelped old Tom, fearfully. "Not that! You durned fool kid, you've led me into everything else—draw the line!"

"Yes! It's time for an honest man to take hold!"

"But—Dick, you're crazy! We can't fight that way?"

"How do you know! It's never been tried!"

"But I don't know how to run for an office!"

"All right. Stay by the ranch! I'll do the work! I'm going!"

"Where?"

"Never mind where. Give me my gun, over behind the stove. Thanks. Good-by—till I see you again!"

And Dick was gone.

Tom stared out of the door till Dick's figure was lost amid the trees that bordered the near-by rock-ledges. The old foreman was flustered and somewhat frightened. He went inside, sat down, and tugged at his gray longhorn mustache. He turned and glared at the sheriff resentfully for a long time. Then, slowly, he voiced his disapproval at the whole scheme of things.

"Politicians!" He spat on the floor. "Dog-gone! *Me!* A respectable cattleman! Turned into a dog-goned, measly, no'count political office-holder! Dog-gone!"

"You're not a politician yet!" snarled the sheriff, squirming out of the bed.

Old Tom looked at him without rancor.

"No. Not yet. But I know what I'm up against. Sooner or later I've got to do it! That consarned kid's got an idea in his head; and that kid's stubborn!"

VIII

THE kid, with his mind set but without any clear idea of ways and means, strode 'cross country over granite ledges and small streams until he came to a lower land where pine-thickets abounded and his feet fell softly on needles and small ferns. In time he neared the road between Spring Garden and Camesa. He came to a mossy picket-fence around a small green clearing. In the center of the clearing, amid barns and sheds, stood an unpainted old house. In front of the house was a lanky man in blue jeans, sawing wood. Dick went over to him, hoping to start a friendly chat and try out his political persuasions.

The man recognized his visitor. His jaw slackened. His body poised motionless, still holding the saw.

"My gosh!" he yelped, in a high-pitched voice. "I hain't got nothin'! I'm a poor man! You lemme alone!"

Dick didn't quite get it at first. He wondered what to answer. The other quickly let go of his saw and sidled around to the other side of his saw-buck.

"What in thunder's the matter with you?" rasped Dick.

The lean man edged toward the open door of his shack.

"Nothin'; nothin'. You lemme alone and I'll let you alone! I don't want no dealin's with no outlaw! I got troubles enough!"

"Who said I was an outlaw?"

The lanky, sweaty rancher took a few more cautious steps toward the door. He halted but it was merely momentary. He spoke over his shoulder:

"I hain't takin' no chances! The sheriff, he come by and sez you sorter turned bad. Please, Mister Williams, I cain't do nothin' for you! I hain't able to, Mister Williams. I hain't mixed up in this business, nowhere, no way, nohow!"

For one short instant Dick felt the contempt which the warrior-knights of feudal days must have felt for human rabbits who scurried out of their paths, but he soon remembered that the rabbits had some justification.

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"Perhaps the sheriff lied," remarked Dick, mildly.

The other shambled over wood-chips and sawdust in front of his house. He held out a propitiating arm.

"I dunno nothin' about nothin'! I'm a poor man and I hain't a-goin' to do nothin' I oughtn't to do!"

"But——"

But the lanky dodger popped into his doorway. The heavy wooden door slammed. Its bolt was shot with a click. Then Dick heard the high-pitched voice yell:

"Maw! Gimme my gun!"

Dick, somewhat disillusioned at this start for his political career, turned and ambled away. He saw he needed real pioneers. But who? Why, the enemies of Tim Duncan, of course! Dick, seeing the light, began to remember names. They were scattered all over the county; that was their weakness; but if somebody unified them——

Dick traveled to a far country.

He marched along back-trails and lived on provisions given by strangers. He acquired a canteen, a lunch-sack, a blanket, a pair of field-glasses, a beard, and callouses on his feet. Two evenings later, after dusk, he came down from the mountains, like a lone wolf, and neared the lights of the Joe McCullum ranch, which stood like an oasis in the vast flat range-lands in the extreme northern end of the county.

Joe McCullum was a heavy man with curly black hair and penetrating brown eyes. His only son had been killed by a gambler in Duncan's place three years before; but Dick refrained from mentioning this. He laid his ideas before McCullum straightforwardly, in the front room of the latter's drafty ranch-house. An eager light played in McCullum's eyes for an instant, but he shook his head.

"No use. It's been tried. The candidates got scared and withdrew. We tried it once. Spring Garden folks tried it. Can you get folks together?"

"That's why I'm here. I'm willing to ride, walk, run and crawl. I'm going to fight this to a finish!"

McCullum looked Dick up and down slowly.

"I hear you've had some trouble lately. Tell me."

Dick told him. He talked until the old-fashioned clock in the corner of the room tolled midnight. Then McCullum arose, converted.

"We'll try it out! Tomorrow mornin' you start south. 'Way past Sandstorm you'll find the home of old Judge Harney. You probably don't know him. He keeps to his own end of the county. Talk it over with him!"

Four evenings later Dick was with the white-haired judge.

"It's all a matter of public opinion," decided the judge. "If you can arouse enough people, you'll have a chance, I think. The job is to get them aroused. You may count on my help."

Dick worked at it. A week later he participated in a quiet meeting at Spring Garden. He saw that interest was growing and he kept traveling about like a missionary—or more like a flea—getting provisions when Providence managed to send them.

Once, at night, he made for the White Rose mine and mill, whose superintendent was friendly, hoping to find food and shelter.

Dick slipped over the brushy hills, toward the cluster of lights where the super lived, just south of the main mill. Dick descended several stiff grades and suddenly found himself sliding down a bare knoll, landing within a hundred yards of the light house. To his dismay, small rocks and pebbles followed him.

He stopped and listened. He heard the thumping of many boots in the house. Then the nearest door opened, throwing forth a shaft of light. Dick stayed motionless. There were strangers in that house and he needed caution. Luckily there was no moon.

"Something's happened!" came the voice of the superintendent. "That hillside doesn't slide unless something comes down it! Jim, get a lantern!"

Dick, with consternation, realized that there was no cover in his vicinity. The land was bare here. The nearest brush was beyond the house. The mill was too far away to hide in. If these men in the house were enemies, he was in a bad position!

Several men were now peering out from the open door. They couldn't see him but they would surely notice a moving object.

"Flash that lantern around!" directed the superintendent. "Let's look into this! Come on!"

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The super was one of Dick's quiet backers. However, it was his job to look into mysterious happenings around his mine. Dick had only one alternative. He drew his six-shooter and advanced straight ahead!

"Hands up!" he commanded, coming into the light and poking the pistol forward.

Four pairs of arms lifted. Dick peered at the men. One was the superintendent, spectacled and mustached. Two others were sub-bosses. The fourth was the sheriff of the county!

"You!" gasped the sheriff.

"Better let me have your gun," said Dick, dryly. "Thanks."

"I've got a long bill against you, young feller! And now they say you're runnin' around, stirrin' up trouble!"

"Well, I wasn't trying to meet you!" retorted Dick. "What are you doing here?"

"That's my business!"

Dick spoke up to the superintendent—

"I'm going to take some grub out of your pantry, like a burglar!"

"Well, I can't prevent you, but you'd better hurry! Three of the sheriff's friends are on the way down from Camesa for a poker game!"

The sheriff glared at the super, who looked entirely innocent. Dick, acting quickly on the tip, grabbed the lantern and herded the others into the kitchen. He threw some stuff into a gunny-sack, slung it over his shoulder, and went out by the back door. The sound of horses' hoofs came faintly from the northward.

"I'll make good when I come into my own!" called Dick, to the superintendent.

"Stay away as long as you like!" roared the super. "Don't come back!"

Dick laughed as he strode away through the mine grounds and reached the friendly brush. He read the superintendent's words rightly. The country around Camesa was still dangerous. Very well. Dick would go somewhere else!

Dawn found him far to the westward, near the county line. Night found him at the camp-fire of three sheepmen, out under the stars. Next morning he had three more followers on his list.

IX

ONE month later, Dick Williams tramped through a craggy mountain pass and across a big sloping meadow covered with bunch-grass, leading to an orchard and a cluster of taller trees over which the gabled roof of a two-storied house could be seen. The month was mid-August. The weather was hot. Sun-gleams radiated from the grass.

This Dick Williams was not the clean-cut young rancher of Camesa. He was a gaunt, unshaven fugitive in tattered clothes and ruined boots. His blond face was burned to a brick color. His blue eyes were inclined to peer about vigilantly and his mobile mouth was set in a grim line. He was so thin that the belt holding cartridges and six-shooter was tightened to the limit.

The slim scarecrow had been here before. Many times. He reached a sloping apple-orchard where chickens were feeding in the grass. He strode down between the trees and reached the sunny, fly-screened back porch of the house. He stopped and listened. There was no sound except the rhythmic clicking of a distant mowing-machine, far out on a hay-field; so he quietly mounted the back steps, opened the screened door and stepped inside.

A cloud of vapor met him in the kitchen. The air was moist and hot. A tall, slim girl, stirring clothes in a boiler on a stove, turned her head when he entered. She looked alarmed.

"You? What's happened?"

"Nothing." Dick removed his torn hat and threw it on an oilcloth-covered table. "I'm just hungry. I came for a hand-out."

Her lips parted somewhat, showing regular teeth. Her brown eyes were thoughtful.

"Has anything happened at your ranch?"

"No; except that I can't get near it."

"Why?"

"They're watching old Tom too closely. Sort of a petty persecution. We're open game. They know I have a personal following now and it's growing. They're trying to head me off. Every rogue in the country is getting free board at Camesa ranch!"

"Can't you stop it?"

"Stop it?" Dick sank into a chair tiredly. "Oh, yes; I could hire gunmen——"

"No!"

"You're right. Anyhow, it doesn't work. I've tried it."

The girl waited. Dick tossed his head resentfully but spoke, like a culprit:

"An Indian named Luis. Hired to track me. We met among the rocks. I had to shoot. That's all."

The girl stared out of the kitchen window

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toward the distant hay-fields below the road. Then she turned toward a cupboard near the inner doorway. Dick laid his head back and watched her. She was slim, supple, clean and graceful; quite a welcome sight after what he had been through!

"What happened to the Indian?" she inquired, in a dull tone.

"A rib. I carried him nearly a mile. Laid him down on the road. A buckboard came along. I signaled the driver and ran away. The driver took the Indian."

"And what will be the result?"

"Oh, I suppose they'll bring some more charges!"

Dick sat up and slammed his fist on the table alongside him, making the cutlery jump.

"I don't want to be an outlaw!" he roared. "I don't want to fight! But I'm in a network. One incident leads to another. Each incident makes it worse. The whole thing's getting vicious. I want it to stop!" Dick lowered his voice. "Excuse me, Ellen!"

"I know; it's been hard; but—why not stop it all now?"

"Stop?"

The girl set the table and laid food before her guest.

"Surrender. Have it over." The girl was hesitant, not knowing her ground thoroughly. "Surely, it wouldn't be worse than *this!*"

"No surrender! If I'm caught, I'm cooped up. Maybe for months! There'd be an expensive trial. No! I've got to keep on!"

"But can you?"

"Listen! When the Republican county convention opens in two weeks—by the way, that's why I came to see your father."

"He's out in the fields, mowing." She wiped her hands on a roller-towel. "I'll call him. You stay here and eat. You'd better not risk being seen."

Dick agreed and started on the provisions. The girl left. Dick stowed away his first meal in a day; and then, after watching through the window and observing her with her father in the lower meadow, he lighted a cigaret, unfolded a newspaper and tried to take a few moments of leisure.

He read the paper fitfully. Suddenly he found himself in the midst of an Eastern dispatch, a semi-caustic story about a notorious politician: "Accused Senator Says he is Martyr." "Bawls his Innocence to the World." "Backwoods Towns Send Delegations." "Wave of Sympathy and Emotion Rocks State!"

Dick slowly folded the paper. He looked at the opposite wall thoughtfully. A great idea was coming upon him.

"If this blatherskite can do it, so can a man with a better cause!" muttered Dick. "Great Scott! At the proper time, I'm going to get arrested!"

He arose. He started pacing up and down on the steamy floor. An outside movement caught his eye. Suddenly he crouched low.

Almost alongside the window, riding along the little lane that led to the rear barn, were Tim Duncan and his satellite, Jerry Daley!

Dick's one glance disclosed that the boss of Sandstorm was neat as usual, clad in black clothes, soft white shirt and flowing black necktie; but upon the cowskin vest of the blue-shirted Jerry Daley gleamed a big star, and the man was thoroughly equipped with rifle and pistol. His hat, swung forward over his truculent eyes, was fastened with an elastic under his round chin. The coarse-grained skin of his face and neck was redder and dirtier than usual, arguing that Jerry Daley had been roaming far afield!

Dick realized his danger but he felt elated. He had alarmed the gang in Sandstorm. He had slipped into settlements, held little meetings, started discussions, and aroused unwilling candidates to stand for a forlorn county ticket. And Duncan knew it. The posses chasing Dick wanted him badly. They wanted to isolate him, side-track him, cage him up for good.

"Maybe you will!" chuckled Dick.

He thought of escape but decided to stay in this house, not to get arrested just yet but to get provisions after these visitors were gone.

There was a door at the side of the steaming kitchen. Dick opened it. He found a dark stairway leading to a cellar. At the top of the stairway was a broad landing filled with trunks, mops and old papers. Dick shut the door and perched on the trunk, with his way of escape open down the stairway at any time. Then he waited.

The first sound that came through the thin door was the girl's voice, in a farther room. Hospitality, probably. These men were guests. Then there was the stamp of heavy feet into the kitchen. The soft, melodious voice of Tim Duncan was heard:

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"But listen, Grimshaw! Keep out of this fool political row! That kid's only a sore-head. Just for argument, suppose he *did* get a raw deal. That's no excuse for other people fighting his battles!"

"We stand for righteousness!" bawled the rock-ribbed Grimshaw.

"Yes; but this matter's too small to get righteous about! Who is this fellow, anyhow? Nothing but a busted shorthorn! *I* know these fellows. I meet 'em every day. They're fine when they win; but when they lose, they howl all over the place! This one's running loose with a gun. He's dangerous! You can't get behind that sort of fellow, can you?"

The loud, orotund voice of Grimshaw came forth, in the same inflexible, hide-bound, self-righteous manner which the zealot had always used. Dick was reminded of the loud cry which had resounded through Tim Duncan's saloon on the night when the raw-boned religionist had fallen among thieves and Philistines. It was the same voice now. It was the same zealot:

"Yes; his ways are not my ways; I fear he lacks in grace. But for all that, my friend—" Dick could imagine Grimshaw's bony finger prodding into Duncan's wish-bone—"I stand for righteousness, and you—you, with your whisky, your cigars, your dives, your smirking Jezebels—you profit by making your filthy companions sodden with rum and gin! You ask *me* to stand aside? For you? For a publican—a dive-keeper—a dealer in cards and sin? No; a thousand times no! You ask *me* to stand aside——"

"No!" yelped the boss of Sandstorm. "I quit! I lay down cold! You can do whatever you —— please! Let's talk about something else! Nice place you've got here, ain't it?"

There was a queer silence for a moment; and then the zealot, probably remembering the laws of hospitality, mentioned the coolness of the front lawn.

Grimshaw seemed to be leading the gambler out. Then Dick heard the sound of another pair of spurred boots, apparently Daley's. Duncan excused himself and returned to the kitchen. He and Daley conversed. Dick heard them.

"Phew!" said the boss. "He's too much for me! I thought I'd like to visit the girl; she's a peach; but not while she has *that* father! Once is enough!"

"You'll have to meet her some other way!" growled Daley.

"No chance," Duncan's voice grew wistful. "But she sure looks like something *real*. Not like those others!" His voice arose, with a trace of asperity. "Quit that fool grin! I mean it. A decent girl's got 'em all beaten. Do you suppose any man ever gets so rotten he doesn't know that?"

"Well, with your money and your looks——"

"Oh, shut up!"

"We-ell," Daley spoke slowly. "Mebbe I can help some. While you're out with the old devil-rassler, I'll put in a good word for you."

"Thanks," came Duncan's voice, absently.

"By the way," added Daley, "why not watch this house closer? This here girl likes Williams, I understand——"

"That's right!" said the boss, suddenly. "I never thought of it! Maybe we will!"

The zealot called from somewhere up forward. Duncan went. Daley was alone in the kitchen. Dick, behind the thin door, feared he might take a notion to poke around; but the man settled in a chair and Dick heard the crackle of a newspaper.

The girl entered. Daley's feet thumped to the floor as he arose. The chair scuffled backward. They started to talk. The girl was polite but absent-minded. Suddenly there was a splash, a hiss, and a muffled exclamation.

"Ouch!" yelled Daley, in pain. "That water's hot!"

"What were you doing?" demanded the girl, from the other side of the kitchen.

"I was just tryin' to look at that towel with the crochet-stuff."

"You should have pulled it up with the stick! That water's boiling! Let me see your hand. M'yes. Here's some baking-soda."

There was quietude for a moment as the burned fingers were being tended; and then Daley swung into a conversation about his boss:

"—now, I do fool things and take chances, but you never see him do that sort of thing. He's got a brain! He didn't have much education to start with; mebbe he wasn't able to begin like some of these fellows who get meal-tickets as soon as they're born; but he done the best he could and he climbed up, little by little, till he's about the biggest

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thing in this here county! Mebbe there's folks that'll say all sorts of things about him; but when you figure that he started off wrong and didn't have nobody to guide him——"

Jerry Daley continued in that tenor. Dick, at the stuffy old stairway-landing, marveled at his shrewdness. Instead of over-praising his boss, the chunky little killer set forth Duncan's faults in a manner calculated to win sympathy and interest. Gradually Dick began to hear the girl interposing questions.

But Daley overdid it. Possibly success or the presence of an enticing girl went to his head. His voice became louder and hoarser. His natural aggressiveness returned in double measure.

"—the boss gets what he wants, see? He's that way. If he wants anything, he goes after it. Folks don't get in his way, either. That's how he's climbed up. I'm like he is. I'm his best pal. If we want land or money or women, we go after 'em. If he went after you, for instance, you'd better lay down and quit. He's that way. I'm tellin' you. Believe me, there's nobody in this county can stand against him. Why, if he wanted, he'd come in here and grab the house and everything in it! Believe me, when it comes to a show-down, he's got the power!"

"What on earth are you talking about?" inquired the girl.

There was a flabbergasted silence from Daley. Then he took the bit in his teeth:

"Why, you, for instance. Mebbe he likes you. I dunno; but if he does, you better be quiet. It'll save trouble!"

Dick sensed an electrical atmosphere beyond the door. He stood up vigilantly. He feared what was coming, but through it all he had an unreasoning pity for Duncan. Duncan's ambassador was making a pretty mess of his case!

The girl's voice came through the door. It was low and cool but highly charged with dynamite—

"I think you've gone a little farther than a guest usually tries to go."

There was another strained, ghastly silence.

"Aw, rats!" snapped Daley, rebelliously. "I'm tellin' the truth, that's all! We do what we like, see? We don't take orders from nobody! If I want to talk to you, you'll listen, see?"

Dick, almost on tip-toe and leaning against the door, was ready to believe that Daley was drunk. Daley seemed too rabid for a sober man. The situation did not demand such vehemence. But Dick failed to understand that Daley had awakened suddenly to find himself in trouble; and, having no social instincts whatever, he took the natural aggressive course and decided to crash out. He was embarrassed, so he covered it by insolence.

"I think you'd better go!" announced the girl.

"Go! Yah! We go when we please! Look here, you ain't tellin' me where to head in! I'll stay as long as I like—see?"

Crash! A chair banged on a table. Daley, to show his complete independence, splintered the chair so that its rungs bounced apart and rattled over the floor.

Dick pitied Duncan again. What an ambassador!

"Go, before I call for father!" commanded the girl.

"Yah!" sneered Daley.

It was time for her to go, but she must have stood by the door, pointing outward. Dick, with his right hand on the butt of his revolver, stood ready in case Daley should attack her; but Daley was in a different mood. He was registering complete indifference to her orders. There was a rattle and a small crash, as if his hand had swept cans, cruets and pepper-shakers off the table.

"You ruffian!" she cried, more in exasperation than alarm. "Leave my house!"

"We do what we like!" snarled Daley, stubbornly. "Nobody's goin' to tell me where to head in! Nobody's goin' to try it! Here. That kitten!"

"No!" gasped the girl.

"I'll show you! We do what we like!"

Suddenly Dick heard him move toward the stove, close to Dick's door. There was a splash, a sizzle, and an amazing yowl.

The girl screamed as if she, herself, was being hurled into the boiler. Then her voice arose passionately:

"You fiend! You coward!" There was a splashing and hissing. "Kill it! For heaven's sake, kill it! You coward—you put it where you didn't dare hold your own hand!"

Dick felt the goose-flesh crawling over his body, followed by a wave of white-hot anger that made him tremble. He understood

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Daley now. Daley's unjustified rantings had kept him guessing; but now he saw the man as one of those stubborn, wilful, vengeful, cruel elemental minds which disclose themselves sometimes under unusual pressures. Daley had been mentally rattled by the girl. The situation was mortifying to his self-esteem. He resorted to the only retaliation he knew, physical retaliation. Not against her. He didn't dare. His boss wouldn't stand for that. So he took it out on her kitten!

To Dick the whole business seemed unreal and fantastical, like a bad dream; but in boyhood he remembered a youth who pulled wings off flies and tied the tails of cats together over a clothes-line so that the cats ripped each other apart. Such people existed. They were facts. It was proven instantly by another blood-curdling moan from the kitchen.

Dick couldn't stand it. In an instant he pulled back the hammer of his six-shooter and opened the door. It swung outward. He emerged into the kitchen; and on his face was a look of austere deadliness which had never been there before.

Daley looked up instantly. His right hand flashed to his hip.

His face had a peculiar expression as it turned. There was consternation, bewilderment and a queer hang-dog look, as if he were astonished at his own savage act; but instantly the expression changed. In that one-fifth of a second he was transformed from culprit to killer. The muscles of his arms played like lightning. He brought the barrel of his heavy pistol up as he thumbed back the hammer.

Dick whipped the barrel of his gun straight downward. He had no time to parley or calculate his aim. He had barely time to pull the trigger.

The gun kicked back in his hand. It sent an explosive flash straight into Daley's body. The whole room detonated. Dishes rattled. Smoke and fumes wreathed the form of Daley.

Daley swayed, lowered the pistol, and then stubbornly tried to raise it again. Dick saw it coming. He pulled trigger again. There was another flash and roar. Through the smoke he subconsciously noted Ellen, transfixed, stationary, numb, with her hands upward and outward, in mute supplication.

It all happened before she could change position.

Daley staggered backward to the table. Blood spurted from his chest. He tried to steady himself by his elbows against the table-edge, but his knees bent under him and he sagged to the floor. His thick lips contorted in a grimace. His eyes looked baffled and somewhat indignant.

"A cat!" he groaned, in astonishment, licking his reddening lips. "Killed—for—a—cat! Me!" His voice became a whisper. "A cat!"

And then he seemed to stiffen.

Dick saw Tim Duncan coming. The zealot was stalking beside him. Dick swung the muzzle of his pistol toward the boss of Sandstorm. Duncan's eyes looked from Dick to the figure on the floor; and then, as he crossed the threshold, his right hand made an involuntary movement toward his hip, though the hand soon wavered. He stared at the man on the floor steadily. He stood motionless.

"You heard it?" asked Dick, coldly.

The boss, cocking his handsome head back, looked at Dick as if trying to gage him better; but there was enmity in his narrowed eyes.

"I heard," answered Duncan, in a low voice. "And now you're in worse trouble than ever. About a cat!"

"No," said Dick, tiredly. "He followed a bad leader, that's all."

Grimshaw pushed himself in front of Duncan. The eyes of the zealot were round and his voice was like a trumpet-call:

"There has been murder in my house! Murder and bloodshed!" Grimshaw stepped forward and shook a bony finger at Dick. "You have taken human life! You have violated the Commandment! What does this mean, sir? Answer!"

Dick, still vigilant against Duncan, stole a glance at the girl. She was in a chair, her hands shielding her eyes.

"Daley—a kitten—insolence," said Dick, helplessly. "Anyhow, the kitten's dead. I'm glad of it. Let it go at that. I'm going." He swung his pistol slightly toward Duncan. "I'll have to borrow your gun and your horse." He extracted the weapon from Duncan's hip-pocket. "Thanks. I guess you know who killed Jerry Daley. You did—with your clever schemes. Think it over!"

"Yes. I'll think it over!" promised Duncan, grimly. "You've killed my best man and you're trying to turn the county against me. Oh, yes; sure. I'll think it over!"

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"Wait!" commanded the zealot, magisterially.

Duncan turned away. Ignoring Dick and the gaunt zealot, the boss of Sandstorm strode over to his dead companion, looked down upon him, knelt, and touched him. At that touch, Duncan showed that he felt stark realization. His face paled and his eyes moistened.

"Jerry!" he cried. "Jerry, old pal! Jerry!"

Dick, filled with many conflicting emotions, softly tip-toed out of the room and out of the house.

X

THE news of Daley's death caused talk throughout the far-flung county. Dick profited. In his tiny camp in the woods near a trout-stream, where he stayed for a few weeks, he decided to put his fortune to the test by attending the county convention personally.

He struck camp and hiked over pine-forests and granite hills to Camesa Cañon. The ranch-house was almost deserted. Everybody except the Chinese cook had gone to the convention.

Dick went to his room and looked in a mirror. He wore a long, sandy mustache and a seven-inch goatee-beard, looking somewhat like a youthful Buffalo Bill but not so neat. His hair was long. His face, deep red, was thin and gaunt. His eyes glinted brightly from sunken sockets. His best friends could hardly know him!

He arrived in Sandstorm late at night, finding the town crowded. Cowpunchers, miners, laborers, cattlemen, sheepmen and saloonmen were among the delegates from the various districts to the Republican convention, and they made their presences felt in the saloons and dance-halls.

Houses in the back streets were hospitably alight. Dick, keeping under cover, knew that some of the houses sheltered his own followers; but he feared spies and tattletales. He passed the night in a hay-field.

Next morning, quite late, he made his way to the district school, a one-story, five-room structure amid locust-trees, just north of the town. He passed a mobilization of horses, buggies and spring-wagons. He got within the gate of the schoolhouse grounds and looked into the windows of its largest room, used as an auditorium. In time he approached the front porch, where clusters of citizens were gathered. Suddenly a man confronted him. It was old Tom in his best clothes, the candidate for sheriff.

"Dick!" he gasped. "You durned fool—go home!"

"How do things look?" countered Dick.

"Rotten! We're licked! They've got a majority. They're throwin' out some of our delegates. Technicalities! You better go! She's likely to be a riot!"

"Leave me!" suggested Dick. "I'm going to sneak in alone!"

"You're crazy! They'll arrest you!"

"I'm going in!"

"Boy, boy, you better be careful!"

"I will. I'm going in!"

"Stubborn— Oh, well; there's no use talkin' to you. All right. Keep your head down!"

Tom strode away, growling. Dick quietly wormed through the folks at the door and made his way down a row of spectators' benches at the rear of the large smoke-filled room. He squirmed into a seat between a fat bartender and a cowpuncher wearing overalls, neckerchief and silvered six-shooter.

There was a rostrum at the far end of the room, graced with a table and a pitcher of water. Behind the table stood a mustached chairman, a town politician, gavel in hand. Committeemen came, reported, and left. Citizens arose and spoke. Cigars belched smoke.

There was a period of tranquility. A clerk's voice droned, droned, droned. A bluebottle-fly came through the window and hummed over the audience. Dick's attention lagged.

Suddenly he observed a tall, gaunt, frock-coated figure striding up a narrow aisle to the rostrum. Curious folks watched him, including the chairman. Dick sat up. It was the zealot, marching sternly over the knees of a dozen delegates in the aisles. His hat was off. His black hair was rampant. He solemnly mounted the cleared space around the speaker's table. He laid his old black hat near the pitcher and faced the crowd. He raised his bony right hand commandingly.

There was a surprized hush.

"What's this?" inquired the chairman.

The zealot, with hand upraised, ignored him. The zealot's head was held high and his eyes seemed to focus on the rear ceiling,

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while the stark light from the windows emphasized his high cheek bones and his bushy eye-lids. His enormous mouth opened. His prodigious voice boomed forth with a certain dismal grandeur of tone—

"Let us pray!"

There was a moment of shocked silence.

"But this ain't a prayer-meeting!" protested the chairman.

The zealot—stern, exalted, immobile—kept his hand up.

"Let us pray!" he repeated.

"Object!" yelled some one.

A hundred confused murmurs arose. The chairman banged with his gavel.

"You're out of order!" he informed Grimshaw. "Sit down!"

"Throw him out!" amended a delegate, from a corner.

"Aw, let him pray!" shouted some one else. "It looks like we need it!"

The crowd laughed. The chairman hammered on the table. The sergeant-at-arms stepped toward Grimshaw; but the zealot remained an immovable black figure towering above the crowd. His voice rolled forth, resonant as a peal of thunder.

"Brethren!" he began.

The crowd stiffened, sighed, mumbled. Some started to protest; but by luck they subsided. They began to sit back. By some occult mastery he had impressed them.

"My brethren, there is confusion here; aye, confusion worse confounded. No man loveth his brother. I see the beginning of a great misunderstanding. Now let us kneel humbly and beseech the guidance which only He in His mercy can give! Let us pray!"

To the amazement of Dick, Grimshaw bent his knee, bowed his head, and calmly proceeded!

There was no counter-move. There couldn't be. The convention hadn't provided against such an emergency. A hush fell upon the crowd. These men—good or bad—had no particular religion but they respected religion when it was thrust upon them; so they bowed their heads or stared at the walls, abashed, uncomfortable and resentful but still respectful to the Deity of their fathers—and mothers!

Grimshaw prayed for forbearance and brotherly love; and gradually, as his austere, sincere voice rumbled through the room it began to influence the crowd.

He prayed for the chairman. He prayed for the delegates. He prayed for the county. Then he began to pray that the county be led to a higher and better future, gradually naming the candidates who might give it better leadership.

The crowd grew restless.

"For heaven's sake!" came the impatient growl of the boss of Sandstorm, from the inner corner of the room.

There was a subdued snicker, but Grimshaw's voice rolled on. Then he ceased. The crowd sighed with relief. Heads came up. Grimshaw arose to his feet and stood towering above the delegates again.

"We will find a good lesson for the day in the third chapter, fifteenth verse, of the Gospel of——"

Crash! The gavel slammed on the desk.

"That's enough!" yelled the chairman, desperately. "Wadda you think this is—a church?"

"It is not!" snickered a delegate.

"Throw him out!" roared somebody.

The zealot's gaunt body became more rigid. His enormous mouth compressed in a line of terrific grimness. He clenched his bony hands. His voice bawled forth again, dominant, penetrating, quavering with passion:

"There has been murder in my home! Murder and bloodshed! I have seen a man shot down—a part of this county's politics. Politics! Lying dead, with a bullet-hole through his chest and his blood on my floors. I say to you, if this be your politics, it were better that the lightning from heaven strike this school and blast it to pieces! Politics! I shall speak about your politics now!"

He stunned them. In the face of his aggressive nerve they couldn't think of anything to say.

He mentioned battle, murder and sudden death. He mentioned the crimes and mistakes of the past. He forbore to abuse any one personally, at first. He merely kept the crowd interested. Then, gathering strength, he flayed the county machine and swung into a vivid description of the county as it should be, a land flowing with milk and honey, and a land full of piety.

He became—literally—a spellbinder. Because of an uncanny mastery of words—which he never possessed before or since—the tall, gaunt, rock-ribbed zealot who looked like a caricature of Lincoln wove his spell upon these men until they were hypnotized, hanging on every utterance. Cowpunchers,

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miners and saloon-keepers blew their noses covertly. Dick felt the emotional wave as well as the rest. He marveled.

Grimshaw arose to his toes:

"And now, brethren, let us start the blessed work of building a better community. Let us choose the right brethren among us to lead in the van. Let us choose them by acclamation—all together—with voices uplifted and blessedness in our hearts! I move we nominate Brothers Williams for county treasurer, Jeffries for sheriff, Harney for judge, McCullum for county clerk——"

"Second the motion!" yelled somebody.

"All in favor, say aye!" bawled the zealot.

Tim Duncan rose to his feet, passionately; but the voices of the multitude shouted in triumph—

"Aye!"

"But it's not legal!" protested the rattled chairman, who himself had fallen under Grimshaw's spell.

Grimshaw bowed profoundly.

"My apology, brother. You put the motion!"

The chairman, befuddled, put the motion.

"Aye!" roared the crowd.

Tim Duncan, his handsome face purpling and his fists shaking toward the ceiling, screeched from the corner:

"You lunatics! You maniacs! You've let this gospel-sharp stampede you! You've nominated the wrong ticket!"

As if Duncan had played a hose on the crowd, they stiffened and came out of their trance.

"My gosh!" bawled a man, near Dick. "Ruined!"

Duncan shook his fists madly.

"You crazy lunatics! You pack of beer-bums——"

"Move we adjourn!" yelped some one.

"Shut up!" howled Duncan.

"Second the motion!" bawled another person.

"All in favor—" said the chairman, dubiously.

"Aye!" The yell was united.

"We gotta get out from under!" exclaimed a man near Dick. "Me, I'm goin' to keep movin'! The boss will go plumb loco!"

Dick realized his debt to the zealot. He also decided to perform his public act of submission to the law right here.

Deliberately he pushed through the talking, surging crowd, and gradually fought his way to the rostrum where Grimshaw still stood like a tall statue. Dick went boldly up the steps. He grasped the man from Spring Garden by the hand. The zealot looked down and began to recognize him, though Grimshaw seemed still dazed by his tumultuous success.

"Fine work!" said Dick. "We all want to thank you!"

Suddenly a voice yelled alongside Dick.

"It's Williams! Dick Williams, the outlaw!"

The crowd stopped jabbering and shoving. Every eye in the room turned toward the rostrom. Dick stood his ground. He noted old Tom, behind the zealot.

"You idjut!" gasped Tom. "Duck!"

"He's the fella that shot Jerry!" yelled some one.

The crowd began to roar. At first it was a growl, and then it gained strength until it became a mob-cry, a dangerous rumbling interspersed with counter-warnings from Dick's supporters. A movement toward Dick started. He saw a flash of steel, down in the tumult of wavering arms and heads. Warily he backed against the wall, with his right hand swinging near his hip-pocket.

Old Tom advanced and held up his arm.

"Hey!" he bawled. "Hey! Hey! Shut up, you fellers! You've nominated me for sheriff. All right. I'll start trainin' for it now!"

He yanked his six-shooter from its holster.

"The first son-of-a-gun that comes up here gits lead!"

He took station alongside Dick and faced the mob. For the moment there was no activity there.

Then Dick noticed a knot of men advancing toward him from the left. In the lead was the round-faced sheriff, sweating profusely. Behind him was Tim Duncan. Tom allowed them to come. Dick stood his ground.

"He killed Jerry Daley!" yelled the man in the crowd again.

"Get him!" bawled some one else.

The sheriff arrived hastily and touched Dick's shoulder.

"You're under arrest!" he roared.

" 'Rah!" yelled the crowd.

"Let him alone!" protested others.

The sheriff, rattled, grabbed Dick's arm.

"Take it quiet!" he pleaded. "Don't start anything, for heaven's sake!"

"I'm not moving," said Dick, amiably.

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"Let him alone!" demanded Tom.

Five men shoved up to the rostrum.

"Yeh; let him alone!" they demanded; and then others hauled them back. It looked like the start of a general mêlée, down there in the crowd.

Dick, with all his calculations, realized he had been a little too public in trying to get arrested. He hadn't counted on such partisan feeling. But now he made amends. He went to the table and held up his hands.

"I accept the arrest!" he shouted. "Cool down, you people! Let's all obey the law!"

The crowd yelled. Some hooted. But the tension was relieved. The sheriff, more vigorous now, grasped Dick's arm tightly.

"He shot Jerry Daley!" insisted a partisan.

Duncan, the boss of Sandstorm, looked down upon the mob and his eyes glittered with contempt. He suddenly strode forward and barked at them:

"Shut up! You should have thought of that before you nominated this fellow! Now, you keep your hands off! This man's going to jail!"

"Thanks," said Dick, with a wry grin.

Duncan peered at him. In the eyes of the boss was speculation, irritation, and considerable anger.

"I just don't want these fools to start shooting each other!" explained Duncan, with a snarl.

"Well," said Dick, amiably, "you started this, you know. You should have left my ranch alone!"

"Ranch?" The boss growled disgustedly.

"To thunder with your ranch! It's gone beyond that. You stubborn fool, you've ruined my whole county!"

XI

TWO days in the county jail, awaiting trial for several offenses, Dick was approached by the sheriff, who looked worried.

"I've got a hunch there'll be trouble," he announced. "Mob. Jail-wreckers. Hanging. That sort of thing!"

"What for?"

"They're mad. Mad as hornets. You've got 'em up a tree. This here county's Republican. They can't turn Democrat all of a sudden, so they'll have to back your whole ticket or shut up!"

"Why can't they turn Democrat?" inquired Dick.

"Well, they can; but they'd look sorter foolish especially after they've nominated you themselves at a Republican convention! And then, they're registered as Republican and there's the state and national elections to figure. No, sir. You've got 'em over a barrel. There's only one way out, and that is to shoot up the whole shebang! I'm scared of it! Do you suppose they want to git behind the man that shot Jerry Daley? Huh! Guess again!"

"If a mob attacks this jail, the decent folks will wipe 'em off the map!" retorted Dick. "The gang's in a minority. I'll bet three-quarters of the county is against 'em right now!"

"Mebbe so; but they're mad. There'll be no mob, prob'ly. They'll just send somebody to visit you, that's all."

"Oh. An accident?"

"Just so. And I don't want to be in it. No, sir. Not *that*. If you see anything suspicious, tell me quick!"

The interview was in the jail corridor, at night. The prison, a good one for an isolated cow-county, had a broad corridor and a flagstone floor, flanked by eight cells with gridiron bars. From five of these gridirons came the lights of candles, where occupants were reading on their cots. The candlelights made criss-cross patterns on the flagstone floor. Dick's cell door was open. The sheriff, holding his keys, stood talking near the main door which led to his office.

"You seem to have information," observed Dick dryly.

"No; but folks are gettin' stirred up. And then there's talk of people in the hills rescuin' you. I don't like it." The sheriff pointed Dick into his cell. "If anything happens here, yell!"

"Thanks," said Dick, vaguely uneasy. "I will."

He wondered what was really going on. He looked out of his cell window, across the moonlit sage-brush plains and toward the great blob of hills where distant Spring Garden lay; but there was no sign for him there and he turned away.

The front door of the jail clanged open again. The sheriff admitted Grimshaw's daughter, who peered down the line of cages till she found Dick. The sheriff stood in the shadows at the front door.

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"Ellen!" cried Dick, alarmed. "Why do you come here?"

"I had to talk with you."

"In this town? At this risk? Traveling across the valley by night?"

"I had to." She lowered her voice. "Father has been threatened. He's been warned to leave this country. Tell me: Who is doing this thing? Is it Mr. Duncan?"

"I don't know. There's no proof. Is that what you came to see me about?"

"There are several things. Mr. Duncan was out to see me yesterday. He acted very nicely. He apologized for that—that other time."

"Huh!" remarked Dick, puzzled.

"But he said—once during the talk—that he was afraid there might be trouble here in the jail."

Dick studied her smooth face. Her eyes were worried.

"It's all right," he reassured her. "I guess nothing will happen."

"I'm not so sure."

He reached a hand through the aperture in his cell-door, and grasped her own gloved hand.

"Don't worry about *me*," he said. "It's you I'm worried about. You—and my ranch."

"Oh, yes; the ranch." She still held his hand. "Tom's gathering a lot of men together. He's been stirring them up. They're furious about your arrest. The whole county is. They're riding in from every section. They threaten to come and clean up this town!"

"Great Scott!" groaned Dick.

He had hoped to arouse the county; but he hadn't anticipated anything like this!

"Go back home quickly!" he ordered. "See Tom. Tell him to guard your home and leave this town alone! And hurry! You'd better not be seen! This town's full of tough characters! Ellen, Ellen, why did you take such a risk?"

She looked down at the tips of her neat riding-boots.

"I was afraid—I know they're going to do something terrible to you here in the jail." She looked up at him frankly. "Oh, Dick, you'll have to get out!"

"Have to get out!"

"Yes. They're dangerous. And you're the only man who can control our own folks. I was wrong in wanting you to surrender. I see it now. You'll have to escape!"

"Confound it—I can't. I don't know whether I'd care to, even if I could. I'm a candidate, you know. Supposed to be law-abiding. It would look funny if I broke jail."

She did not seem to hear him. She glanced quickly toward the big iron front door where the sheriff was smoking a cigar and pacing up and down. The instant his back was turned, she slipped something into Dick's hand.

It was a small steel saw.

Dick took it. He didn't know what to say. Her eyes were flashing and her lips were parted in a smile, as if her troubles and fears were half-over already. It was Dick's cue to register joy, but he couldn't. He merely patted her hand.

"I'm too worried to thank you now," he whispered, gently. "I'm worried about you. Will you promise to slip back home right away?"

"Yes," she agreed, meekly; and she started.

Dick stayed up till late in his shadowed cell, but he heard no more about her, so he decided she must have won through.

The mustached Petey arrived next morning. He brought a large market-basket full of food, including pies and cakes.

"The chink sent it," explained Petey. "We thought you wouldn't like the jail grub." Then, sotto voce: "Be careful about that peach pie. You'll find a saw between the crusts.

Another saw! The jail was getting full of them!

"Thanks," choked Dick, trying to suppress his emotions. "I'll guard it carefully. Did Tom send you?"

"Yeh. I started last night but I got hung up by a lame horse. Tom says everything's all right now, except for money, which is gettin' shy around the ranch. As soon as you can saw yourself out of here, Tom says you're to go to the ranch-house and him and all the Spring Garden folks will take care of you. He's got twenty men with him."

Dick glanced thoughtfully out of the barred window toward the sunny main-street of Sandstorm, with its saloons and board-walks and hitching-racks.

"How is it Tom didn't try to come here and help me break jail?" inquired Dick, out of curiosity.

"Him? Oh, we thought of that; but we didn't want to make it too rough."

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"And the sheriff let you get into this jail, carrying a saw inside a pie? Didn't he look into your basket?"

Petey looked puzzled.

"He seen it! He seen the pie and I think he seen the saw, stickin' out of the crust!"

"What?"

"Yeh. I thought it was funny. I thought he might have been absent-minded when he looked at it; but he seen it! And then he let me come right in!"

"So-ho! He wants me to break jail! Is this to let me get killed outside the jail walls, or is it to save my life?"

"Gosh!" Petey's eyes began to pop. "I never thought of that! Gosh. 'S a trap!"

"Yes." Dick studied the flagstone floor of his cell. "It's a trap. They know it was a mistake to arrest me! They know it will be a mistake to do anything to me while in jail. They don't know how else to get rid of me. So this is the scheme!"

"Stay here!" ordered Petey, unnecessarily. "I'm goin'!"

"Where to?"

"I'm gonna see some friends in town. Republicans. We'll come and talk to the sheriff. We'll hold him while you walk out. Then we'll go back to the hills!"

"Confound it— Here— You let the Republicans alone! You go back to the ranch. Stay with Tom."

"But—we got friends in town."

"All right. Keep 'em that way. Leave your hands off! You go back to Tom and tell him to send a visitor twice a week, to keep in touch, see?"

"But——"

"You've heard my orders!" snapped Dick. "Now obey!"

Petey withdrew, somewhat crestfallen. Dick paced his floor or tried to read. The sheriff came at times and watched him covertly; but there was no conversation. Evidently, the sheriff awaited Dick's next move.

Dick suspected that the official would have been glad to get rid of him. The sheriff was in a bad box. If anything happened to Dick, the sheriff would have to face an enraged county. If nothing happened to Dick, the sheriff might have to face an enraged political gang who remembered the death of Jerry Daley. The sheriff was plainly nervous.

The hot day ended. Evening came. The evening star showed above the distant mountains, a jewel in an azure setting. Then other stars came out. The main street of Sandstorm became lighted. It awoke to life. Dozens of horses were tethered at the hitching-racks, and the music of four establishments joined in a welter of discord. Then the moon shone, throwing so clear a light that the prisoner, in his purposely darkened cell, could recognize some of the figures moving up and down the board-walk.

There seemed to be no evidence of excitement. It was an ordinary night in Sandstorm. Dick, alone with his thoughts, wondered if he had not overestimated the importance of himself and his cause. He had aroused a certain sentiment; yes; but it didn't seem to mean much, outside of moral support or even a mild political support. Tom was ramping, surely; and yet Dick wondered if the net result of all his and Tom's efforts was not apparent right now—Dick in jail, peering out through the bars, while Sandstorm and its gang piled their trades just as usual.

The pianos were jangling down the street; the doors were swinging into the saloons; the chips in the gambling-houses were clicking merrily; and through an open window Dick could hear the monotonous voice of a dealer at a roulette-wheel.

Suddenly he heard another sound, a faint drumming from somewhere behind the jail. It seemed to grow nearer and then it subsided, drowned by the noise of the nearest dance-hall. Dick turned to his cot and started his simple preparations for bed.

Suddenly he heard muffled talk from the sheriff's office, at the front of the jail. There was a scuffle.

The door into the jail corridor opened, throwing a blaze of light upon the darkened row of cells. A man appeared in the light. It was old Tom, hatless and coatless, holding a six-shooter in his right hand. Behind him was a knot of men, surging through the door. One of them held the neck of the sheriff, who had been forced to unlock the door.

All the prisoners stirred, jumped out of bed, and sprang to their feet.

"Dick!" yelled Tom. "Where are you!"

"Here!" said Dick. "What's the matter?"

"Matter?" Tom's voice reverberated through the hollow room. "Matter enough! You gotta get out of jail tonight! You're goin' to be murdered! Hurry up! Git out o' here!"

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Tom and his crowd shoved the sheriff to Dick's cage. The official opened the door. Dick stepped out. The room was full of his friends. He recognized delegates from many parts of the wide county—Spring Garden, Kellerman, Chrystal Lake and Dry Valley, all armed and all apparently itching for trouble.

"Who's going to kill me?" inquired Dick.

"We dunno. We only heard it. But it's part of the same gang that shot Grimshaw!"

"Grimshaw?"

"Yeh. They killed him. Shot him through the window yesterday while he was eatin'. His gal's disappeared. She left his ranch yesterday mornin' and that's the last we've seen of her!"

XII

IN SPITE of Dick's consternation at the death of Grimshaw, he was forced to see that it had brought men who could not have been induced to leave their homes for mere politics. This was an unexpected reinforcement, but it was an element which might not be controlled easily. Here was another worry. Dick was beset by them. Where was Ellen? Who killed Grimshaw? Instantly Dick's mind flew to the person who seemed to be at the bottom of everything. Tim Duncan!

Dick turned to Tom. Dick's voice had a snap to it—

"How many men have you?"

"Thirty—forty, more on the road. The whole county's on the move!"

Dick got it. The whole county on the move. Now was his time to strike! He held up his hand to the crowd.

"All right, boys—let's clean things up right now. We'll visit Duncan!"

The men took up the cry. They wanted a victim anyhow. Some one thrust a six-shooter into Dick's hand as the whole aggregation surged to the door.

"Lynch the men that killed Grimshaw!" shouted some one.

Dick put on the brakes.

"We'll lynch nobody!" he roared. "We're here to see the laws enforced! If anybody thinks differently, let him go home! The rest can come on!"

There was a yell of assent. The mob—ready to act for good or evil—had been check-reined at the start, and Dick felt he could hold them.

The ex-prisoner led his ramping, stamping clattering crowd out of the jail. They had not been seen until now; they had arrived at the other side of the shadowed building and had met the sheriff at a rear door. Sandstorm's lighted porches were full of the usual traffic and its dance-hall music dinned merrily. But when the small army swept into the street from the prison, Sandstorm's denizens sat up and then began to vanish. Chairs scuffled back. Swinging doors opened frantically. Booted feet trotted for cover. The music ceased. In a twinkling the sidewalks were deserted.

Dick led his crowd down a lonely dirt street, flanked by empty porches and by silent though well-lighted buildings. The town was hushed expectantly. The only sound was the thump of marching boots and the slight creaking of holsters or gunstocks.

A man raced across the street from Duncan's big place down at the corner.

"Get him!" yelped an excited citizen.

"No!" yelled Dick.

A pistol flashed and roared at Dick's left. The target jumped, zig-zagged and escaped down an alley.

"Stop that!" roared Dick madly to the man who had fired.

But the damage was done. A shot exploded from the shadows at the corner of a store. A second shot came from further down the street. Dick and his friends raced for the walls of the buildings. The lights in a saloon, opposite, went out.

Some one else down the street began shooting. Dick's mob took action. A man in the crowd began blazing away. Another followed suit. A fusillade began. Acrid powder-smoke began to drift around the porches.

"Nervous!" snarled old Tom, irritably. "No sense to it!"

Dick, holding close to the walls of the buildings, found himself near the edge of the window of a lighted saloon. Cautiously he looked inside as he passed. The place was deserted. He saw nothing but bare sawdust and an empty bar. The window alongside him cracked, crashed and shattered. A splinter of glass went past his head.

"Who was the fool that started shootin'?" demanded old Tom, truculently. "He's sp'iled the whole party!"

"Not yet," growled Dick, ducking away from the window. "We're going to Duncan's!"

"He's warned now!"

"We'll go anyhow!"

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"Yeh. Stubborn!"

Dick's friends, firing in every direction, were now strung along the board-walks for half a block, taking advantage of posts and shadows. Another saloon darkened. Then another. A shot flared out ahead, opposite Duncan's; but the big resort kept its lights defiantly gleaming.

The firing lessened. After all, there was nothing to shoot about. Dick, looking around the moonlit street, saw that his followers were losing momentum.

"Duncan's is down the street!" he reminded them. "Come on!"

With a whoop, the mob resumed its journey. Dick, in the lead, started running. In an instant the crowd was surging along, an irrestible little armed force which nobody cared to fight for the moment.

They clattered up to the board-walk in front of Duncan's. The place was crowded inside except for a space near the wide front door. Dick entered, halting at the threshold while his friends massed up behind him. He eyed the saloon people, a mixed aggregation of men and women who faced him curiously. He knew there were many enemies here, but he didn't know who they were.

"Where's Duncan?" demanded Dick.

"Not here," grunted the fat bartender.

"Where is he?"

"Dunno."

Dick strode to the private room and shoved the door open. Duncan was absent. Dick walked back to his men, planning a search. He was started now. He couldn't quit.

Suddenly a wild peal of gunfire resounded around the corner of the house. The women turned white under their false complexions and slipped away. The saloonmen stood their ground, sullenly.

Dick suddenly realized he was outnumbered. He instantly planned a retreat to the jail. But his crowd was scattering, taking shelter in the shadows outside the building. A bullet whipped through the open doorway and smacked into the side of the bar. Dick felt extremely conspicuous but he remained facing the hostile but leaderless element in the saloon, lest they join their friends outside.

A man in the mass grew restive. Then another started forward. Dick raised the muzzle of his pistol.

"What's this?" growled some one. "A hold-up?"

"No," said Dick, coldly. "It's a hold-down. You're being held down, see? I'll shoot the first man that makes for a door, front or back!"

Another rattle of gunfire exploded outside.

"Look!" yelped old Tom, who had stayed alongside Dick. "Over in yonder road! Beyond that building!"

Dick glanced backward, returning his gaze instantly to the saloon folks, but in that glance he saw past a darkened saloon across the street, where a cavalcade of dark forms was approaching the town diagonally. In a moment they swung into plain view and clattered into the dirt roadway, a mass of armed men able to sweep the street from sidewalk to sidewalk.

"Spring Garden!" whooped Tom. "Over here, boys!"

"No!" roared Dick. "Tell 'em to take the jail again, and hold it! We'll join 'em there!"

There was a yelp from the horsemen. They rode down the street. Dick went to the doorway, where he could partially observe them and partially watch his cornered and somewhat slow-minded enemies in the saloon.

A few shots burst forth from around the corner, but Dick's mind was not on these. He was concerned with careful, crouching figures which he noted in shadowy alleys and behind fences. A back-street, seen out of a side window, was becoming alive with figures. Voices called to each other. Men were advancing carefully toward the noise.

"It's all a mistake!" he mumbled sotto voce to Tom. "Our crowd went off at half-cock. We can't take Sandstorm this way! They're too many for us! In ten minutes the whole town will be on our necks!"

"But the whole county's on the road!" considered Tom.

"Not enough! Not soon enough! We've started something we can't finish! Call the boys together! Run for the jail!"

Tom disappeared. Dick faced his saloon folks again.

"I'm going," he announced, briefly, "but you'd better travel the other way. Now, git!"

And such was the influence of his tall presence at the door that they didn't argue. Dick joined Tom.

Dick and Tom streaked down the street, gathering their people. There were a few desultory shots—folks were now thoroughly excited—but Dick believed he was leading

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his men to a common center when a new fusillade behind him caused him to halt and turn. Some of his folks had remained in the shadows near Duncan's.

There was a sinister red glow at the rear of the big building.

"Fire!" yelled some one down the street.

There was another sharp crackling alongside Duncan's.

"This is crazy!" rasped Dick. "Our friends are making fools of themselves! They're trying to mob a town—putting themselves in the wrong! We only wanted Duncan!"

"They're mad!" explained Tom, without heat. "Some pretty raw things have been done to 'em! Grimshaw, for instance!"

"I know. And Ellen's gone. Everything's wrong. Still, we've got to get our people to cool down. We'll go at things in another way!"

"Too late!" grunted Tom. "Look! The roof's burnin'!"

Tim Duncan's great saloon-dance-gambling hall—one of the largest and most expensive between El Paso and the Coast—was entirely aflame except for the immediate front. The dry old building had started to burn like tinder. Sparks and embers began to fly as the suction of a new draft through the roof made the fire leap high. Pistol-shots crackled near it. A ruddy glow filled the main street. The fronts of buildings opposite shone brightly in reflection.

Dick's crowd hurriedly began to center on the jail. Some sniper far beyond the building started firing toward it. A wisp of dust flicked up in the dirt roadway. A few more shots were heard further away. A bullet spatted into the board front of a building. The glare in the street became brighter.

"Who's hurt?" inquired Dick.

"We dunno yet," said some one in the crowd. "One or two, mebbe."

"We'll wait for more men!" Dick decided. "Take to the shadows!"

Dick made for a board sidewalk, darkened by the wall of a store. A man came around a corner hastily, followed by two others. The trio came abreast of Dick. The light shone in their faces. In a flash he recognized the leader.

"Duncan!" he yelled, exultantly. "Now I've got you!"

The leader stopped. He glared at Dick and then tossed up his hands impatiently. His eyes were haggard, his coat was off, his clothes were dirty and his hair rumpled.

"Let me alone!" snarled Duncan. "Stop this row. Some of my men are hurt. Call off your gang. Confound it, we've got to head off this nonsense! It's gone far enough!"

"Long ago," said Dick, drily. "Where's Ellen Grimshaw?"

Duncan's voice was savage:

"I don't know! I'm finding out! I'll get the fools that took her! I'll peel their hides off! She'll come, all right! She'll come if I have to swing somebody!"

"Oh. Then you know nothing about it!"

"I don't!" roared Duncan. "Do you suppose *that's* the way to handle a girl? Scare her to death? No, thanks! It's some of my friends! They wanted to do me a favor, —— them!" Duncan shook his fists down the street. "The pin-heads! The idiots! Look at' em—still running around in circles!"

He started forward, ignoring the knot of hostile and well-armed citizens around him.

"I'll show 'em! I'll show 'em! What they need is a little discipline!"

Dick grabbed his shoulder. Duncan's two friends were now helpless, and Dick and Duncan were squarely face to face.

"I'll hand out the discipline, after this," announced Dick. "Call your gang over here. We're going to tell 'em a few things!"

Duncan refused to accept this program.

"What now?" snarled Duncan. "Haven't you got enough? The county's wrecked. Jerry Daley's dead, my saloon's gone—what more do you want? Do you think I'll get on my knees to you?"

"You started it," retorted Dick. "Now, stop it!"

Duncan—beset by friend and foe alike—was forced to consider it thoughtfully. He started down the board sidewalk. So did Dick. Embers and sparks were flying through the air. Men were passing buckets on the roofs of other buildings. A crowd was massing near the fire. Riderless horses were running along the street or disappearing around corners. A buggy traveled down the road. A four-horse stage came into sight beyond the burning saloon. A line of flame flashed across its path. The lead horses leaped and plunged.

Duncan cupped his hands.

"Hey!" he yelled, at the top of his voice. "Stop that!" This is Duncan! Duncan! Come over here!"

A confused babel of voices arose along

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the street. Some of the men, buckets in hand, turned and looked.

"They've got the boss!" yelped some one.

A mass of men melted into the shadows. Weapons glinted in the light from the flames.

"You lunatics!" raved Duncan. "You wooden-headed idiots!"

He stamped on the sidewalk and waved frantic hands on high:

"Stop it! Cool down, you fellows!"

But his words were drowned in cries and yells. A pistol flashed flame. Then another. The boss was disgusted. Dick, watching him, was reminded of the bygone interview in Duncan's office.

"I understand," chuckled Dick. "You never have anything to do with anything. You just tell 'em what to do. The rest is their look-out!"

"Aw, rub it in!" snarled the boss. "But just remember one thing, friend: You'll never get out of here unless I hold down these friends of mine!"

"That's true," admitted Dick. "Go ahead!"

The town henchmen were gathering in force. Dick saw them mobilizing in the shadows beyond the blazing building. They had recovered from their first bewilderment and were acting as if they really intended business.

Now was Duncan's chance to gain control of his townspeople and sweep Dick and his friends away. The present battle-odds were favoring Duncan. Dick saw it. So, probably, did Duncan; but the cost of further fighting was too great. Both realized it.

"We'll have to get together, you and I," reiterated Duncan, licking his lips. "We could whip you——"

"For the moment," snapped Dick. "And then you'd have the whole state on your back!"

Dick knew he was exaggerating; but he sensed the possible reaction if news went forth from Sandstorm that a gambling ring had shot up a lot of citizens. Could Duncan survive the resultant howl? Dick doubted it. So, apparently, did Duncan.

"We'll talk it over," he grunted. "We'll have to calm these people down! Come on!"

Duncan, having decided, ignored the danger of shots from nervous persons. He stepped forward again, yelling and holding out his hand. Fortunately nobody fired.

"Hey—hey!" he bawled. "Call a truce! We're going to have a pow-wow!"

"Who is?" demanded a fighter.

"Me and this fellow, Williams."

"And they burned your saloon!" came a sarcastic voice.

"That's my business!" roared the boss. "You shut up! There's been enough trouble tonight!" He turned to Dick. "Tell your crowd to keep quiet. Then come with me!"

The master of Sandstorm never doubted his authority, and neither, apparently, did his crowd, once they became partially calm. Dick left Duncan and spoke to a knot of his men, but less aggressively:

"Lay low," he advised them. "This business may be settled tonight without fighting."

"Ezra Grimshaw's still dead!" reminded a gaunt, sober mountaineer, leaning on his rifle barrel.

"I know it," agreed Dick, "but let me handle this."

"You better handle it right, then!"

Dick departed, somewhat ill at ease, realizing that here were passions and undercurrents which he might not quite control. He saw that in this he was less secure than Duncan. The real strength of Dick's crowd tonight—the men who were grim and determined—were mainly stern citizens outraged by the murder of Grimshaw. Dick's leadership, to them, was a side-issue. He saw it. He knew he was up against the crisis of his life.

He returned to Duncan. Tom stalked behind him.

"I'm ready," said Dick. "Lead on."

The boss of Standstorm turned without a word and strode along the board-walk, giving no attention to the knots of curious men who stared up at him from the street. These were mostly Duncan's friends. Some townsmen hung around the burning wreck of his saloon; but these were passive spectators. Duncan led onward silently.

The trio left the board sidewalks. They went along a dark path bordered by umbrella-trees. They passed several straggling houses and finally entered the wire gate of a small garden which surrounded a clean, square, one-storied little house with lights shining through the four front windows.

"My home, gents," said Duncan, at the front porch. "Walk in."

Dick and Tom entered, doffing their hats. They turned toward a lighted room at the right, where they stopped.

Two strangers were facing them. One

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was an elderly woman, apparently Duncan's housekeeper. The other was a short, stout, florid, efficient-looking man with keen eyes and iron gray hair. He wore neat, brown city clothes, partially hidden by a long tan duster.

Duncan gasped at sight of him.

"Great Scott! I'd forgotten about you!"

The newcomer nodded and stretched out his right hand in greeting. The handsome boss took the hand but his face was wrinkled with perplexity and some embarrassment. He turned his eyes upon Dick. Their expression was disgusted, yet not without humor.

"Mr. Williams," said Duncan, with extreme, almost sardonic, politeness. "I want you to meet Mr. James P. Glover, of San Francisco. He's the general manager of the Sunset Power Company. He and his company have wanted Camesa Cañon for a long time. They covet your property. They're at the bottom of all this trouble."

XIII

IF DUNCAN had struck Dick with a blackjack, the young rancher would not have been more stunned. He blinked at the stout man, first stupidly, then resentfully.

In an instant his mind comprehended what appeared to be the whole plot—the old story of a corporation which wanted land and was willing to slug the owner. They had used Duncan and his gang to do the slugging for them. Dick's eyes opened wide as he saw the formidable enemy confronting him. Visions of the immense power and resources of this giant corporation flashed across his mind. So that was what he was up against. Unlimited strength, unlimited wealth. What terrific odds to face now, after all the other battles!

Dick wrenched his hand away from the stranger's.

"No!" he cried, desperately, from the heart. "No! I'll not stand for it! I'll go down fighting!"

Duncan laughed, somewhat bitterly.

"Oh, Glover's not to blame. Sit down. Calm yourself."

Duncan led the way into the old-fashioned sitting-room and swung out two chairs for his guests, ignoring quiet old Tom. Dick still eyed the newcomer.

"I don't feel very calm," he admitted.

"Well, don't glare at Glover. It's not his fault. He doesn't know anything about it!"

Dick turned to Duncan. The latter sank into a chair and explained.

"He heard about Camesa and its water supply. He sent out an agent to make some sort of a deal. The agent got drunk and blabbed that the power company wanted the cañon. I saw a chance to make a profit. See? I—some of my friends got the agent out of the way. Shipped him out on a freight-train bound for Mexico. Maybe he's there yet. Then I tried to get your ranch, so as to sell at a higher figure to the corporation. I just saw a chance for profit. That's all."

"All?"

Dick stared from one man to the other. Then he seated himself, like a man in a trance. He noted that Glover, the power-company chief, was frowning prodigiously. Duncan refused to meet his look. The boss produced a cigar, chewed the end, ran a hand through his rumpled black hair, and kept silent. The woman left the room quietly.

"Funny coincidence that this power-company chief should be here tonight, of all nights," observed Dick. "I never heard of him before!"

"Coincidence, nothing!" rasped Duncan. "I asked him to come. I thought I'd have your ranch by this time!"

Old Tom horned in. He nudged Dick.

"I'm satisfied!" he remarked. "Brother Duncan had everything schemed out. When it comes to the nice little details, he's a wonder."

"Shut up!" snapped Duncan.

"I will," said Tom. "I'm goin' outside to watch the men on the street. I don't want anybody to git excited till this here business is all finished."

Dick nodded. Tom left. The stout Glover cleared his throat.

"Do you own Camesa?" he asked Dick, point-blank.

"I do."

Glover turned to Duncan.

"You seem to have made a most peculiar mess of things. You wrote me that you practically controlled Camesa Cañon. You suggested this date for my visit. Now I learn you have misled me entirely!"

"Here's the owner of the cañon," snarled Duncan, pointing at Dick. "You can do your business with him!"

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Dick had been appraising this master of a great corporation whose vast power-lines stretched across the hills and dales of a hundred Western counties. Suddenly Dick visualized the possibilities for Camesa: A great dam, a big concrete power-house; and a prosperous ranch with thousands of sleek cattle!

"Do you really want that cañon?" inquired Dick.

Glover was a business man—

"What's your price?"

Dick's heart jumped; but he still wanted to keep some control over his own ranch. He thought he saw the way.

"No price. Make it a sub-corporation, part of your big company. Give me half the stock."

Glover sat up, astonished. His glance swept over Dick's rough clothes, the costume of a back-country rancher.

"Young man, what do you know about corporations?"

"College," said Dick, laconically. "Engineering. Law."

"Oh. Of course, then, you realize we can condemn your property under the law of eminent domain. We're a public-service corporation. We have the right."

"But not to condemn another power company!"

"You're out of business!"

Dick, with a pang, realized how close this was to the truth in every way—financially, politically, and regarding his leadership over the restless crowd still patrolling the main street. But he kept a stiff upper-lip.

"Suppose I resumed building tomorrow?"

He pondered on that monumental bluff while Glover looked at the patterned red carpet on the floor. Glover's next words were ominous—

"We can make trouble for you."

"Yes," agreed Dick, disappointed.

"But possibly we can still get together. The sub-corporation idea is not entirely bad. We have several of them under our general control. The fact is," Glover looked straight at him, "we want the power in that cañon. We need it to develop this country."

Dick held down his elation.

"In that case, you'll not find me hard to deal with."

The sound of a horse's galloping hoofs came into the room from down the street. The sound came nearer. The animal halted in front of the house. In a moment there was a knock at the door. Duncan strode there and opened it, facing a young, sporty-looking fellow with a lean jaw and a hooked nose. The newcomer smiled at the boss but spoke in a low voice.

Duncan roared a savage reply:

"In the dry-wash behind town, hey? Bring her here! You idiot—bring her here! Hurry up! Tell the whole gang to come! I've got something to say to them!"

Dick was on his feet. The door slammed.

"I didn't do that!" shouted Duncan, heatedly, tossing up his hands with an impatient gesture. "You can't charge me with that! Those fools have ruined everything!"

"Let's get that girl!" demanded Dick.

"Oh, no. They'll come, all right! They'll come!" Duncan's voice was trembling with passion. "I'll show 'em! I'll handle 'em, thanks!"

"Who killed Grimshaw?" inquired Dick, suddenly.

"How do I know? Are you trying to charge me with that?"

"I don't know," answered Dick, with truth.

There was another knock at the door. Duncan threw it open furiously. Old Tom stalked past him and reported to Dick:

"Forty men just rode in from the north-country ranches. I sent messengers over there when Grimshaw was killed. They're late, but they want to join the party. I told 'em to stick around the jail till you came."

"That gives us plenty of men," observed Dick, for Duncan's benefit.

"Yep," agreed Tom, grimly. "It does!"

Glover expressed his curiosity—

"What kind of a party is this?"

"We'll know shortly," retorted Dick, looking at Duncan. "It may mean peace or war. We'll know tonight."

"Oh, call it off!" exploded Duncan. "You've made a good bargain for your cañon! What more do you want? Let it drop!"

"Maybe. On one condition."

"What's that?"

"All your gunmen, tin-horns, loafers and gamblers will get out of the county and stay out!"

"What?" shrieked Duncan, open-mouthed.

"You started all this," reminded Dick. "Now finish it!"

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Duncan's head went up. It was a handsome head now, with a tinge of pride in it. His almond eyes flashed with the light of battle again.

"No! They've been my friends! Good or bad, my friends. You're asking too much. No, sir! Never!"

In that single moment Dick respected him. There was a flicker of admiration in Dick's eyes. But he held an unsuspected trump card. His right hand went inside his coat—he hadn't been searched at the jail except for firearms—and drew forth a soiled paper from an inner-pocket.

"Here's a law that Grimshaw wanted enacted. The title is: 'A law forbidding all public dance-halls, games of chance, and liquor-selling within the limits of the county——'"

"You wouldn't dare!"

"Dare? After Grimshaw's murder? In his name? Well, if it's necessary in order to get rid of some of your friends, we'll try it!"

Duncan, white-faced, clenched his fists. He was being beset from all sides and he strove frantically to see a way out. He began pacing up and down the floor. He was dangerous now.

"You can't!" he exploded, halting suddenly. "You can't! This is a wet county! A cow-county! You'd smash the big property owners—the saloonmen—all of us! It's ruin! They'd fight to the death! You can't do it!"

"We have the power! The election's a sure thing!"

"Do you think folks would vote for that?"

"Yes! We'll tell everybody just why we're clamping down that law!"

Duncan glared wildly. His mouth was half-open. He seemed undecided whether to spring at Dick or to argue further. Finally he controlled himself.

"Be reasonable!" he pleaded. "You haven't won the county yet. We can still fight. For heaven's sake, man—let go!"

"I'm reasonable!" retorted Dick. "We've got the right to get these people out of the county! I want to see no bloodshed!"

Did Duncan suspect Dick's uncertain control over the restless mountain men patrolling the streets near by? But no. Duncan was too beset with other thoughts to observe this possible flaw.

"I can't do it!" yelped Duncan, despairingly. "They're my men! I can't go back on them!" There was a wild look in his eye. He swung back his right arm threateningly. "I can kill you! I can blow you through that wall!"

Dick was alarmed enough, but he kept his voice steady—

"Then you'd be in trouble for fair!"

"But why—why do you insist on that law?" screeched Duncan, bringing up his arms helplessly.

"I don't. But I may have to. It's up to you. I'll give you a further reason for it: Tom's going to be sheriff of this county. He can't start very well with your gang hanging around town. See? So they'll have to get out!"

Dick thought he detected a ray of hope in Duncan's eyes; but he quashed it:

"I want no vague promises. They leave tonight. We've got control now! We'll keep it!"

"You mule!"

Dick kept silent. His ears caught the patter of many hoofs outside, galloping nearer. The embattled Duncan sprang to the door. He opened it. Several men came up the gravel pathway; and then Ellen ran into the house as if fleeing from them.

She halted at sight of Duncan, drawing back slightly. Uncertain and apprehensive, she looked around the lighted room. She saw Glover, a stranger. Tom was away from her line of vision. Then she saw Dick. Her lips parted. Her face whitened. She turned and looked at Duncan again. She didn't know what had gone on in this house; she merely realized she was in Duncan's home and amid Duncan's armed men, with Dick standing defiantly among them.

She drew her own conclusions. She rushed straight to his arms.

"Dick!" she cried, in wild alarm. "Dick! What are they doing to you?"

XIV

IT MAY be that a hurricane jealousy or a maddening sense of impotence possessed Tim Duncan right then and there. He looked as if he wanted to bite somebody. The first whimpering, shuddering words from Duncan's mouth apprised Dick that the boss's temper had gone completely off center. Dick, looking over the glossy hair on his shoulder, was forced to realize the truth.

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The boss of Sandstorm was wildly enamored. He coveted Dick's girl as frantically as he desired Dick's power-house. He had played this game carefully. He had laid his soft snares and planned his moves like a master, only to have his fool friends stamp all over his chances, gum up his signals, murder his ideas, balk him, baffle him, trip him, and make his whole campaign a total, complete, irrevocable loss.

No wonder the gambler went savage!

He didn't go after Dick. He sought the real authors of his downfall. The enraged boss used the lash of his virulent tongue upon his own men. He fairly screamed:

"You idiots—you blind men—you fools—you snakes-in-the-grass! You lunatics! Did I ask you to steal this girl? Did I ask you to scare her, grab her, bind her, gag her, run her all over the country? You interfering fools, come outside while I blow your brains back into the air where they came from!"

The girl trembled at the wild gust of passion. Dick, holding her closely, found himself remembering the cool, sardonic words of Duncan himself not so long ago: He never knew what his friends were doing. He only gave them the general idea. The rest was their look-out!

But Dick refrained from comment.

Duncan continued in a whimpering voice that was blood-curdling in its leashed ferocity:

"And so you've got me whipped—smashed me—knocked me out—busted all my plans! All right; all right! We'll see!"

"We thought you wanted to get her!" blubbered one of the dazed kidnapers.

"You thought! Well, you'll think no more! You're through!"

The boss's haggard eyes glared about the room. He didn't look for Ellen but for an instant he stared past her to Dick. Dick thought the man might move against him. He shoved the girl away slightly.

But Duncan had a different idea.

"Here!" he screeched. "You want these men run out! All right! Let's run them out! Let's kick them clear across the desert! Here's where you and I can agree! We can fight about other things later! Come on! Let's start!"

Then Duncan violently shoved his bewildered followers out through the doorway.

Never for an instant did he doubt his strength or authority with them. Never was his resolution better shown. He pushed them backward. Some of them were fighters; all were rough characters; but such was the power of his long leadership that they allowed him to back them clear out of the house.

"Great Scott!" gasped Dick; and then a look of amazement crossed his face.

Complete victory was in his grasp! He, the bankrupt young fellow who had been robbed, bedeviled, hunted and jailed, was coming to triumph because of Duncan's own friends!

"Let me go!" he whispered, eagerly, to Ellen. "I can't stop now! It's almost life or death!"

He grabbed his hat off the table and started to follow the bickering coterie with Duncan. Then he stopped. Suddenly he remembered that the girl didn't yet know of her father's death! She was smiling slightly at Dick; her lips were parted; her smooth complexion was colored by excitement. She seemed somewhat bewildered but very much alive and happy. Dick didn't have the heart to spoil it now. He touched her arm with great gentleness.

"Old Tom will stay to guard you. So will Mr. Glover. There'll be no more kidnapings!"

He turned and smiled at the power chief, who looked somewhat ill at ease; and then he made for the street.

The knots of men were still there, in larger numbers than before. When Dick, Duncan and the others came along the board-walk, folks seemed to feel that some decision had been reached. They crowded forward. The light from the buildings glinted on the shadowy faces of nearly three hundred men.

Dick called a halt on the board-walk, just behind a pump and a trough, within a stone's throw of the jail. He faced a hushed crowd.

"We've decided on the terms of peace!" he began.

The crowd remained silent.

"Certain trouble-makers are going to get out of the county tonight. Some of you men will escort them."

There was a deep-throated murmur. Dick caught the ominous growl but forced his voice to remain cool:

"We've got a list. I'll read their names: Joe Adams, Bill Burke, Mike Delaney——"

"What?" roared a belligerent person.

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"Mickey Franks, Steve Heller——"

There was a roar. Dick had feared this sign. He had feared the bloody battle which might ensue if he had tried this without the presence of Duncan. But Duncan was here, alongside him.

"Mark James!"

"No!" bawled a big man, shaking a fist in front of Dick. "I'll fight! Come on, fellas—we've had enough of this! Let's bust 'em!"

Dick knew it was the crucial moment. He felt the belligerence of the crowd. Most of all, he sensed that he, himself, would be the first target. He swung his right hand where it could reach his side quickly.

"What's the idea!" roared an angry voice. "Tryin' to run us out?"

Duncan leaped upon the corner of the trough.

"Yes," he yelled, passionately, "and I'm helping him!"

There was an awed, amazed silence. The figure of the boss of Sandstorm was clearly outlined in the light from a window opposite. The hatless, coatless Duncan, with clenched fists, went forward and faced the crowd without fear. A murmur of talk began. Then, out of the sea of faces, came one clear voice—

"You Judas!"

As if a flash of lightning had thrown the scene into bold relief, Duncan instantly saw the frightful position he was in. The man was stark petrified. His jaw dropped. A trickle of sweat glistened on his brow. He turned his face slowly toward Dick. It was an agonized face, with terrible lines about the mouth. He licked his lips. Dick knew the man would gladly murder him that instant; but Duncan was too beset by the growling, murmuring crowd.

Suddenly Duncan jumped back off the trough. He tossed up his hands. His voice was sobbing:

"I can't! I can't! I see it now—I can't go on with this!"

"You traitor!" bawled a big fellow, shoving to the fore. "Sell us out, will you? Well, we'll have something to say about that!"

There was an answering roar from the mob. Duncan, frantic in his endeavor to regain mastery, backed to the wall of a wooden building just behind the porch. He reached his right arm backward and held it there.

"You dogs!" he thundered. "Do you think you can turn on me?"

"Oh, no!" gibed some one. "But you can turn on us! Oh, sure!"

"Let Duncan alone!" bawled some one else.

But the foremost aggressors were surging forward. They reached the line of the porch. They began to cross it.

Dick side-stepped and slipped out of it. He let matters take their course.

"Back!" snarled the boss. "Get back!"

They stopped. They might have been balked right there by the man facing them; but some one fired a pistol. Its flame streaked out of the dark mass of men and upward toward the porch-roof above Duncan's head.

With a roar, the mob of men stepped forward.

Dick, stepping cautiously around the edge of them, noted that the crowd was far from unanimous. His own men were getting out. Others were gathering in knots and bunches, yelling remarks. The main mass, up on the porch, was struggling much harder than one lone man seemed to justify. It seemed to be a small riot. Some one howled. There was a quick flash of flame in the crowd, accompanied by a muffled thud.

Dick ran toward his own men, who were massing toward the jail. Behind the building and the gathering crowd he could see the dark forms of many horses. The men nearest Dick recognized him and gathered around him. For a few minutes they silently watched the writhing figures and flying fists on the semidark porch.

"And Duncan's still got friends!" exclaimed an awed onlooker. "If I hadn't seen it, I wouldn't believe it!"

"Some people are loyal, no matter what happens," observed Dick. "That's the pity of it."

The fighting, yelling, stamping mob seemed to reach the climax of their fury and began to subside. They separated into knots and spread out. There were no more shots. The clusters of men on the dimly-lighted street separated further, though they still struck at each other. Several battered persons were already detaching themselves from the mass entirely. A tall fellow, with blood streaming down his nose, lurched across the street in front of Dick, passed under a light which showed his mashed face

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vividly, and then disappeared into a dark gap between two buildings.

Dick knew his moment had come. He had to strike now, while he held an overwhelming advantage. Tomorrow they might patch up their troubles. Tomorrow? He didn't want any such tomorrow!"

"Come on!" he roared to his men. "Let's get this over with!"

This time he was sure of his power. He had survived thus far, partly by fighting, partly by luck, partly by sheer bluff; but now—at last—he stood on firm ground! He gave his command like a leader.

The men of Spring Garden and the north country ranches, with a roar, marched along the street and circled around the huddled and somewhat surprized mass of weary battlers in front of the pump and trough.

Dick, followed by several others, leaped up to the board sidewalk. He stumbled over a groaning figure. He halted. His eyes took in the dim outlines of the wreckage of battle—a broken window-pane, fragments of glass, a horse-trough set askew, some boards awry in the sidewalk, a pistol, a pipe, some torn cloth, an old boot. Behind all these sat a hatless, coatless man, with his back against the wall and his helpless legs spread out on the boards.

"Duncan!" yelled Dick.

The man turned his tousled head so that a distant light illumined it dimly. A line of blood ran down from his scalp. The left side of his face was swollen. The eye was closed. His mouth was a bloody gash. His right arm hung limp. The once handsome boss of Sandstorm was a horrible sight.

Dick, repressing his emotions, bent over him.

"Shot?" he inquired, gently.

Duncan licked his sore lips. By breathing hard and by contorting his face he managed to form hoarse words. They were loaded with resentment.

"No. Stepped on!" he breathed hard again. "Two ribs busted. An arm. My legs. My face!" He paused. "I went down. They fought all over me. Riding boots. High heels. Spurs. Knees. Hobnails. Everything. Ugh! Me! Stepped on!"

It was suspiciously like an angry sob! Dick felt a great pity for him, but after all, wasn't Duncan the author of his own misfortune?

"Never mind!" said Dick, cheerily. "We'll round 'em up and run 'em out for you!"

The broken boss turned away, registering complete disgust.

"Go ahead!" he snarled. "I've had enough of 'em!"

Dick went ahead. This time there was no real opposition. Within fifteen minutes the old Duncan gang's power was a thing of the past. Its backbone was broken.

Dick took station in front of the jail, watching knots of horsemen leading their sullen guests down the street. There were not many of the latter. It was the object-lesson that counted. Dick felt a weary relief, like a person who drops a heavy burden. His task was done.

He felt a hand on his shoulder. He turned to behold Glover, the stout man in the long brown duster.

"What are you doing here?" demanded Dick, absently.

"I was curious. Your girl's safe enough. So I came out. I've been watching this show." Glover chuckled. "Too bad we didn't meet months ago. It would have saved trouble!"

Stubborn Dick thoughtfully watched the horsemen changing the town's personnel.

"Yes," he admitted, slowly. "It would have!"

But his eyes looked beyond the horsemen. His imagination saw Camesa Cañon looming before him, not as it was but as it would be, topped by a great white power-house where many giant motors sang the song of the greater civilization he had fought for.

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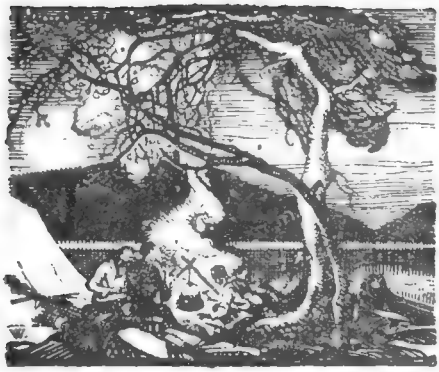

THE CAMP FIRE

A Meeting Place for Readers, Writers and Adventurers

Our Camp-Fire came into being May 5, 1912, with our June issue, and since then its fire has never died down. Many have gathered about it and they are of all classes and degrees, high and low, rich and poor, adventurers and stay-at-homes, and from all parts of the earth. Some whose voices we used to know have taken the Long Trail and are heard no more, but they are still memories among us, and new voices are heard, and welcomed.

We are drawn together by a common liking for the strong, clean things of out-of-doors, for word from the earth's far places, for man in action instead of caged by circumstance. The *spirit* of adventure lives in all men; the rest is chance.

But something besides a common interest holds us together. Somehow a real comradeship has grown up among us. Men can not thus meet and talk together without growing into friendlier relations; many a time does one of us come to the rest for facts and guidance; many a close personal friendship has our Camp-Fire built up between two men who had never met; often has it proved an open sesame between strangers in a far land.

Perhaps our Camp-Fire is even a little more. Perhaps it is a bit of leaven working gently among those of different station toward the fuller and more human understanding and sympathy that will some day bring to man the real democracy and brotherhood he seeks. Few indeed are the agencies that bring together on a friendly footing so many and such great extremes as here. And we are numbered by the hundred thousand now.

If you are come to our Camp-Fire for the first time and find you like the things we like, join us and find yourself very welcome. There is no obligation except ordinary manliness, no forms or ceremonies, no dues, no officers, no anything except men and women gathered for interest and friendliness. Your desire to join makes you a member.

ONE of the things that writers and editors (including your editors) as well as readers slip up on every so often is the weight of gold. A character in a story sometimes nonchalantly packs a value in gold or dust whose weight he couldn't really lift off the ground. So the following from our old comrade Alex. McLaren won't do any of us any harm. I don't think, however, that Mr. Coleman is to be debited with an error. At our May 20th Camp-Fire, in reply to many letters of inquiry, he gave us all the data on the Lost Adams "mine" that he'd not given at a previous Camp-Fire. What he said about the burros was prefaced with "According to the legend in that country," and the statement that there was $5,000,000 in the bag was given merely as the say-so of an old Mexican.

Hollywood, California.

I read that letter of M. M. Coleman's in Camp-Fire with great interest and perplexity. I have myself wasted many months of good time and scads of the proverbial filthy chasing just such "butterflies" as he so alluringly describes—and I'm still cutting the crown out of my hat to patch the seat of my trousers with. What gets me in that letter is the bunch of twenty burros.

FAR be it from me to start quibble over gnat's eyebrows, or things of no more magnitude, but to put it mildly—somebody erred. I do not think that Mr. Coleman detected the error or he would not have put it before the discriminating bunch around the fire.

Naturally I am interested in any argument that

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savors of gold, since a goodly portion of my misdirected career has been devoted to winning that metal from nature. I have in my time, ground out, melted into bars, and assayed an amount that will run up in seven figures. Not for myself, but for others, understand.

An ounce troy of C. P. gold is valued at $20.67. There are 29,166 troy ounces in an avoirdupois ton. An avoirdupois pound of C. P. gold is worth approx. $301 which would put an avoirdupois ton at about $602,000 (the actual figure is however nearer $602,861).

I CAN NOT find are cord of C. P. gold ever having been found in nature; it is invariably based to some extent by other metals in chemical combination—or mechanical. My experience has been that most of the gold found in the mining West runs from sixteen to nineteen dollars per ounce, according to the amount of combined silver, copper or other bases it may contain. But we will in case of subsequent figures, assume that the old Padre's gold was C. P. and give the burro a little the best of it.

I ASSUME that five millions lying in that bog was that which was hastily unloaded from the twenty burros. "Some load!" sez I, and in still louder voice: "Some burros!" inasmuch as the weight of the five million would be approximately 16,611 pounds avoirdupois. Dividing that among the twenty lowly jackasses would give each one a load of over 800 pounds. And again I say, "Some burros!"

A fairly good load for a burro is 150 pounds. I have seen burros carrying twice that, but they didn't do it often or for far.

Pardon my taking up your valuable time on this, but my notion of Camp-Fire is a place to sit and chew the rag in comfort, and if possible for the enlightment of others seeking information.—ALEX. MCLAREN

LAST Winter Uncle Frank Huston sent me the following letter from our Comrade Captain L. H. North. As he asked for the return of the original and as it was returned before I could check up our copy for correctness of proper names I can't answer for the spelling as we have it.

As to Buffalo Bill. That's been a problem for years. The old-timers are practically unanimous in saying that Cody has attained a place in the public mind to which he is not entitled in comparison with other scouts. But—and this is significant—there is generally the disposition to leave him in the place he has attained. Undoubtedly he had his good points as a man and a friend. Instead of bombarding his record with facts, they seem inclined to say he had a gift for getting publicity and to let it go at that.

And I, well, I've caught the attitude from them and have raised at Camp-Fire no question of Buffalo Bill's laurels. He had his good points; it seems a shame, also, to shatter an idol many of us raised in childhood. But, on the other hand, Camp-Fire is a place for the real truth, especially concerning the history of our country. It isn't fair to suppress what seems the general verdict of those in best position to know the facts.

So I'm just stating the general case and giving this letter. Can't we let it go at that and not enter into a thorough discussion? It's for you to decide. You are Camp-Fire.

The "Frank" referred to in the letter is of course Major Frank North, who commanded the famous Pawnee Scouts:

Columbus, Nebraska.

MY DEAR UNCLE FRANK: Your very interesting letter came in due time and I have read it over and over and have tried to answer, but had to give it up every time and even now I am hardly fit to write. I hardly know where to begin to answer your questions.

I DON'T know where Crude was buried or where he lived in California. I knew the Pawnee (Knife Chief) that skinned the man on Rawhide Creek. It was about ten miles east of Fremont, Nebraska. Tall Bull was a Dog Soldier. I don't know what society Roman Nose belonged to. He was killed at the Beeches Island Fight in 1868.

Now about the white men in the Indian camp at the Custer Fight. I have probably heard the same stories that you have, but I never got anything authentic. You should read "The Fighting Cheyennes" by Grinnell. They (the Cheyennes) told him about the fight, but said nothing about any white men being with them. I was not at Cheyenne in 1881, but I was camped there with my Wolves in 1867 when the first log house was built.

YOU say I have a higher opinion of Cody than you have. I don't just know what I wrote but I will tell you something that happened in 1867.

The Cheyennes under Chief Turkey Leg tore up the track and derailed a train at Plum Creek station. Nebraska. They killed the train crew, burned several cars and carried off a lot of goods. My brother was ordered to take a company of the scouts there and he shipped them down from the end of the track, which was somewhere about where Sidney is now. A couple of days after he got to Plum Creek the Cheyennes came back after more plunder. Frank crossed the river and fought them on the south side, killing 17 of them and taking the wife of Turkey Leg and one boy prisoner. A short time afterward General Sherman, General Harvey, General August and a couple of United States Senators came to North Platte to make a treaty with Spotted Tail, Man Afraid of His Horses, Pawnee Killer, Cut Nose and several other Sioux chiefs and the Cheyenne Turkey Leg. Frank was there and when he went into the Council Tent Turkey Leg knew him and asked him through his interpreter if he had some of his people prisoners and, when Frank said he had the woman and a boy,

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Turkey Leg said he had some white prisoners he would exchange for them. Frank said all right, to send after them and he would bring the woman and boy to North Platte. Turkey Leg sent runners to his camp on the Medicine and brought in two girls and three boys and Frank took the woman and boy up and made the exchange.

Now this was the only train that was ever derailed on the Union Pacific, but Cody in his book says that in 1869, just after the Tall Bull Fight, he went from Fort McPherson with Major Brown after some Indians that derailed a train and tells how they killed a lot of them. In other parts of his book he takes credit to himself for things that Frank or the Pawnee Scouts did, so I guess you can imagine what I thought of him.

I NEVER knew Frank Gruard very well, though he was with us on the Winter Campaign with Crooke in 1876-77. Old Bill Hamilton was along too, and Tom Cosgrove, Bill Rowland and I don't remember who else. We had the best mixed up mess of Indian Scouts—100 Pawnees, 100 Shoshones, 70 Ogallalas, 15 to 20 Cheyennes and about the same number of Arapahoes. We got along all right with the Shoshones and Cheyennes, but came near having a mix up with the Sioux. Major Clark had charge of the Sioux and he didn't have any discipline at all. They just did as they pleased. He used to come over to our camp and ask Frank what he did to make his men obey orders. Frank would laugh and say, "I take a club to them." What was the use of telling an Army officer that you must win their confidence, never tell them a lie and always do as you said you would?

Well, this is about as poor an excuse of a letter as any one ever wrote, but I have been, and am yet, a pretty sick man, so will close. Write to me when you can.—La-Shav-oo-Kit-te-buts. (Little Chief.) L. H. North.

N.B.—I thoroughly endorse Capt. North's statements above, without any exceptions, as being absolutely correct and hope "Camp-Fire" can find room for his letter, which I beg be returned to me.—F. H. Huston.

IT'S a fair bet that these comrades never heard of one another before, yet here they are, through Camp-Fire, engaged in a little act of goodfellowship and good feeling. And this is only one sample of thousands of cases. Our Camp-Fire does build up friendship among men separated by many miles and many other things. That's good in itself and it's Camp-Fire's small but steady and persistent contribution toward a kindlier feeling in the world. Than which said world needs nothing more acutely.

Kinsman, Ohio.

A few months ago a letter of mine asking for some pertinent facts in regard to the Custer Fight was published in *Adventure*.

I received several replies. Two in particular which answered my queries were from Mr. J. M. Zinman of Philadelphia and Mr. C. M. Spalding of Erie, Pa., who sent me a copy of the Cyclorama of Custer's Last Battle. Mr. Zinman's identification number is ——.

I wish to thank those who have helped me to obtain this information, yourself included. I would be gratified if you would publish this short letter as I am desirous of securing a lithographed copy of the paintings "Custer's Last Rally" and "Custer's Last Charge." I believe they are by John Mulvany. Have been unable to locate them but felt that some *Adventure* reader might be able to tell me where I can get these.—Wesley Fitch.

FOLLOWING Camp-Fire custom, G. W. Barrington rises to introduce himself on the occasion of his first story in our magazine.

Born in Otoe County, Nebraska, 1876, where the old Overland Trail crossed the Missouri River. My parents were treking to the Platte Valley, where they homesteaded.

AT THE age of fourteen, I fought the battle of Wounded Knee (Winter of' 90-'91) completely wiping out Sitting Bull's old band, then commanded by Chief Big Foot. In this I was assisted to some extent by General Miles and the Seventh Cavalry—Custer's old regiment. This near Pine Ridge, South Dakota. Lest historians rise to dispute this, will explain that my participation in this sanguinary encounter was largely imaginary, as my Good Old Dad overtook me in the hotel office at Chadron, across the line in Nebraska, dragging me back home by the scruff of the neck, This explains why a few Sioux survived.

Since then I have gone to the Philippines with Green, scrapped the insurrectos under Otis and Mc Arthur and paraded through China under Lord Seymour, but the brilliancy of my first campaign in the two-foot snow up where the piney waved stands first in my list of warlike endeavors.

Right there, too, I acquired the wanderlust, and it struck in deep.

DURING the succeeding twenty years, I encircled the globe three times, financing my travels as I went and never bumming a meal or a mile of transportation. I made extended stops in Manila, Honolulu and Nagasaki, and yearn for them to this good day.

Have been ranger, guide, painter, carpenter, tinner, cement worker, farmer, cowboy, fisherman, county official, dog trainer, editorial writer, paragrapher, wrestler, footracer, nurseryman, night-watchman, stationary engineer, stockman, circus employe, and, recently, free lance feature writer.

"Law," was my first attempt at straight fiction, and I always shall be glad that I placed it with the magazine which fosters a spirit of camaraderie and *esprit-de-corps* between and among its editors, writers and readers. The traveler who has kicked about the earth and been kicked about it, steps within the cheery *Adventure* circle as one emerging from chill gloom to take a seat by a glowing hearth.

I neglected to state that I shoved myself through high school and college at odd times when nothing more exciting was in view, but that the knowledge so attained formed the least portion of what I look upon as my education.

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To cruise about the rim of things, to see the seas and isles and jungles; to sit familiarly with the brown man or the black in kraal or temple, patiently tugging at the mask of his reserve until his inner self has been revealed, is the greatest of all earthly privileges, to say nothing of the bold souls of your own nationality whom you encounter here and there on the beaten trails—some of them lovable, some of them despicable, but every one of them a *man*.

There are three reasons why I have eschewed pack and trail. One is a blue-eyed blond just the height of my heart. The others are smaller.

Reading *Adventure*, I can soothe recurring attacks of travelers' itch, stay at home with wife and babes, and, at the same time, travel in spirit with the good fellows who still wander as I wandered, see as I saw, and feel as I felt.

Indeed, the magazine is like getting letters from home, to a man whose home once was—well, just everywhere—G. W. BARRINGTON.

IN ONE way or another snakes are always likely to be dangerous. Here they've got two Camp-Fire friends to kidding each other. I sent Mr. Hurst's letter to Mr. Harriman and the latter's reply is given with it:

Hollywood, California.

I have had some experience with almost every kind of snake that's ever been born or brewed west of the Mississippi, south of Skikomish, north of Tequilla and east of Vodka so, naturally, I throwed my ears forward when I seen this E. E. Harriman's article in the Dec. 10th settin' of the Camp-Fire for two reasons why. One's 'cause it's snakes and t'other's 'cause Harriman wrote it.

Reminds me of the guinea-pigs Newt Bowhay used to keep back of the Del Zante Hotel—I rode in there one day o' my youth and got to playin with the little critters and Newt come out and warned me not to pick 'em up by the tail 'cause their eyes would drop out.

NOW Harriman's dad-dawned three-colored snakes has got me itchin in the same place—I wish you would ask our friend Harriman to map out one of them snakes with any combination of red, yellow and black that won't put the black between the red and yellow or that won't put the yellow between the red and black or that won't put any one of them colors between the other two. If he just sits back on his heels and grins, then we know he was kiddin' us and we will grin with him and take the joke graceful.—PAUL HURST.

MR. HARRIMAN'S replv:

Los Angeles, California.

Dear Paul: Sorta kinda think you've got the old man where the hair is short, don't you? Well, you laugh good and loud *now*. I'll laugh later.

To quote scripture—"Out of thine own mouth will I judge you."

SEEN all kinds of snakes, mountain snakes, desert snakes, swamp snakes and bottle snakes, hey? And still you don't know that king snakes and coral snakes wear the three colors in rings, far apart. Very observing you have been, Paulus.

Now I have seen these snakes and know whereof I speak, but don't take my word for it. Go to the library and get hold of Ditmar's book on reptiles of America. Professor Ditmar is called the greatest living authority on snakes. I find that he agrees with me to a hair.

'S FUNNY, if you have hobnobbed with all kinds of snakes, that you are not yet aware that a king snake will show inches of plain body color, then a ring of red-black-yellow, then more plain color and more rings. A coral snake is like a king snake, excepting in the tricolor mixture, which is spaced differently, just as I said in Dec. 10 Camp-Fire.

I once saw a king snake at Switzer's camp whose body color was a plain ivory white of great brilliance. The tail section, about 7 ins. long, all plain, then a ring of the tricolor, then about 6 inches white and another ring. The rings were only about ¾ of an inch wide.

I have seen other king snakes with a far darker body color, about the same as the side of a garter snake.

No, Paul, I was not kidding you nor was I imagining things.—E. E. HARRIMAN.

THE old steamboat days on the Mississippi and its tributaries will always stand out as an interesting page in our history. The rivalries among the various boats and among their captains brought about many exciting contests shorter but perhaps even more keen than the races between the famous clipper ships. From Frank H. Hanson come, at Mr. Cox's request, some facts concerning them:

Mauston, Wisconsin.

I am enclosing a copy of pages 147 and 148 of what is known as "Authors National Edition" volume IX, Mark Twain, (Samuel L. Clemens).

WITH reference to the fastest time ever made by a steamboat on the Mississippi Twain says on page 146 of the same book "That trip we went to Grand Gulf, from New Orleans, in four days (340 miles); the *Eclipse* and *Shotwell* did it in one. We were nine days out, in the chute of 63 (701 miles); the *Eclipse* and *Shotwell* went there in two days. Something over a generation ago, a boat called the *J. M. White* went from New Orleans to Cairo in three days, six hours and forty-four minutes. In 1853 the *Eclipse* made the same trip in three days, three hours, and twenty minutes. (Time disputed. Some authorities add 1 hour and 16 minutes to this). In 1870 the *R. E. Lee* did it in three days and one hour. This last is called the fastest trip on record. I will try to show that it was not. For the reason: the distance between New Orleans and Cairo, when the *J. M. White* ran it, was about 1106 miles; consequently her average speed was a trifle over fourteen miles per hour. In the *Eclipse's* day the distance between the two ports had become reduced to 1080 miles; consequently her average speed was a shade under fourteen and three-eighths miles per hour. In the

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R. E. Lee's time the distance had diminished to about 1030 miles; consequently her average was about fourteen and one-eighth miles per hour. Therefore the *Eclipse's* was conspicuously the fastest time that has ever been made."

YOU will find from his statement, therefore, that while the log of time as set forth in the record has been regarded as officially correct, it is not, because of the difference in the length of the river mileage between points at different times. The Mississippi is quite a river to change its course, as is also the Wisconsin.

The Mississippi is regarded as a navigable river. Of course the Wisconsin is classed as navigable for purposes of legal fiction.

While the Mississippi changes its course quite regularly so does the channel at one side or the other and it makes cut-offs and at times rambles into new bends and things of that character. The Wisconsin is still worse so far as the channelling of the river is concerned.

The Mississippi River pilots used to be, of necessity, acquainted with the river from one end to the other and had to keep acquainted with its changes by intercommunication. We have never had any real pilots on the Wisconsin River outside of the lumber raft men. That is easily explained and best explained by a quotation from the Government engineer way back in the old days. I do not know if I have the exact words but at any rate he reported to the Government that the Wisconsin River would only be navigable if they lathed and plastered the bottom of it so that it would stay somewhere.—FRANK H. HANSON.

The following enclosed by Mr. Hanson, is "The Record of Some Famous Trips; From Commodore Rollington's Almanac; Fast Time on Western Waters," the figures following the names of the boats of course indicating days, hours and minutes:

From New Orleans to Natchez—268 miles.

		D.	H.	M.
1814	*Orleans*	6	6	40
1814	*Comet*	5	10	0
1815	*Enterprise*	4	11	20
1817	*Washington*	4	0	0
1817	*Shelby*	3	20	0
1819	*Paragon*	3	8	0
1828	*Tecumseh*	3	1	20
1834	*Tuscarora*	1	21	0
1838	*Natchez*	1	17	0
1840	*Ed. Shippen*	1	8	0
1842	*Belle of the West*	1	18	0
1844	*Sultana*		19	45
1851	*Magnolia*		19	50
1853	*A. L. Shotwell*		19	49
1853	*Southern Belle*		20	3
1853	*Princess* (*No.* 4)		20	26
1853	*Eclipse*		19	47
1855	*Princess* (New)		18	53
1855	*Natchez* (New)		17	30
1856	*Princess* (New)		17	30
1870	*Natchez*		17	17
1870	*R. E. Lee*		17	11

From New Orleans to Cairo—1024 miles

		D.	H.	M.
1844	*J. M. White*	3	6	44
1852	*Reindeer*	3	12	25
1853	*Eclipse*	3	4	4
1853	*Shotwell*	3	3	40
1869	*Dexter*	3	6	20
1870	*Natchez*	3	4	34
1870	*R. E. Lee*	3	1	0

From New Orleans to Louisville—1440 miles

		D.	H.	M.
1815	*Enterprise*	25	2	40
1817	*Washington*	25	0	0
1817	*Shelby*	20	4	20
1819	*Paragon*	18	10	0
1828	*Tecumseh*	8	4	0
1834	*Tuscarora*	7	16	0
1837	*Gen. Brown*	6	22	0
1837	*Randolph*	6	22	0
1837	*Empress*	6	17	0
1837	*Sultana*	6	15	0
1840	*Ed. Shippen*	5	14	0
1842	*Belle of the West*	6	14	0
1843	*Duke of Orleans*	5	23	0
1844	*Sultana*	5	12	0
1849	*Bostana*	5	8	0
1851	*Belle Key*	4	23	0
1852	*Reindeer*	4	20	45
1852	*Eclipse*	4	19	0
1853	*A. L. Shotwell*	4	10	20
1853	*Eclipse*	4	9	30

From New Orleans to Donaldsonville—78 miles

		H.	M.
1852	*A. L. Shotwell*	5	42
1855	*Eclipse*	5	42
1854	*Sultana*	5	12
1856	*Princess*	4	51
1860	*Atlantic*	5	11
1860	*Gen. Quitman*	5	6
1865	*Ruth*	4	43
1870	*R. E. Lee*	4	59

From New Orleans to St. Louis—1218 miles

		D.	H.	M.
1844	*J. M. White*	3	23	0
1849	*Missouri*	4	19	0
1869	*Dexter*	4	9	0
1870	*Natchez*	3	21	57
1870	*R. E. Lee*	3	18	14

From Louisville to Cincinnati—141 miles

		D.	H.	M.
1819	*Gen. Pike*	1	16	0
1819	*Paragon*	1	14	20
1822	*Wheeling Packet*	1	10	0
1837	*Moselle*		12	0
1843	*Duke of Orleans*		12	0
1843	*Congress*		12	20
1846	*Ben Franklin* (No. 6)		11	45
1852	*Alleghaney*		10	38
1852	*Pittsburg*		10	23
1853	*Telegraph* (No. 3)		9	52

From Louisville to St. Louis—750 miles

		D.	H.	M.
1842	*Congress*	2	1	0
1854	*Pike*	1	23	0
1854	*Northerner*	1	22	30
1855	*Southerner*	1	19	0

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From Cincinnati to Pittsburg—430 miles

		D.	H.
1850	*Telegraph* (No. 2)	1	17
1851	*Buckeye State*	1	16
1852	*Pittsburg*	1	15

From St. Louis to Alton—30 miles

		D.	H.	M.
1853	*Altona*		1	35
1876	*Golden Eagle*		1	37
1876	*War Eagle*		1	37

Miscellaneous Runs

In June, 1859, St. Louis and Keokuk Packet, *City of Louisiana*, made the run from St. Louis to Keokuk (214 miles) in 16 hours and 20 minutes, the best time on record.

In 1868 the steamer *Hawkeye State*, of the Northern Line Packet Company, made the run from St. Louis to St. Paul (800 miles) in 2 days and 20 hours. Never was beaten.

In 1853 the steamer *Polar Star* made the run from St. Louis to St. Joseph, on the Missouri River, in 64 hours. In July, 1856, the steamer *Jas. H. Lucas*, Andy Wineland, Master, made the same run in 60 hours and 57 minutes. The distance between the ports is 600 miles, and when the difficulties of navigating the turbulent Missouri are taken into consideration, the performance of the *Lucas* deserves especial mention.

The run of the *Robert E. Lee*

The time made by *R. E. Lee* from New Orleans to St. Louis in 1870, in her famous race with the *Natchez*, is the best on record, and inasmuch as the race created a national interest, we give below her time-table from port to port.

Left New Orleans, Thursday, June 30, 1870, at 4 o'clock and 55 minutes, P. M.; reached

	D.	H.	M.
Carrollton			27½
Harry Hills		1	0½
Red Church		1	39
Bonnet Carre		2	38
College Point		3	50½
Donaldsonville		4	59
Plaquemine		7	5½
Baton Rouge		8	25
Bayou Sara		10	26
Red River		12	56
Stamps		13	56
Bryaro		15	51½
Hinderson's		16	29
Natchez		17	11
Cole's Creek		19	21
Waterproof		18	53
Rodney		20	45
St. Joseph		21	2
Grand Gulf		22	6
Hard Times		22	18
Half Mile below Warrenton	1	0	0
Vicksburg	1	0	38
Milliken's Bend	1	2	37
Bailey's	1	3	48
Lake Providence	1	5	47
Greenville	1	10	55
Napoleon	1	16	22
White River	1	16	56
Australia	1	19	0
Helena	1	23	25
Half Mile below St. Francis	2	0	0
Memphis	2	6	9
Foot of Island 37	2	9	0
Foot of Island 26	2	13	30
Tow-head, Island 14	2	17	23
New Madrid	2	19	50
Dry Bar No. 10	2	20	37
Foot of Island 8	2	21	25
Upper Tow-head-Lucas Bend	3	0	0
Cairo	3	1	0
St. Louis	3	18	14

The *Lee* landed at St. Louis at 11:25 A.M. on July 4, 1870—six hours and thirty-six minutes ahead of the *Natchez*. The officers of the *Natchez* claimed seven hours and one minute stoppage on account of fog and repairing machinery. The *R. E. Lee* was commanded by Captain John W. Cannon, and the *Natchez* was in charge of that veteran Southern boatman, Captain Thomas P. Leathers.

OUR Camp-Fire is certainly a means of bringing together old friends whom the years have separated and lost from one another. At an April gathering Colonel James Morris Morgan of Washington, D. C., told us of some of his many adventures in various parts of the world. As a result Camp-Fire at once gets letters from another Confederate sailor and soldier, who helped the *Merrimac* sink the *Congress* and *Cumberland* and saw her fight the *Monitor*, and from a man who as a child was with Colonel Morgan in one of his Mexican adventures. Also, through his letter to Camp-Fire, Colonel Morgan got into touch with a former comrade in a daring blockade-running exploit.

I sent the two letters on to Colonel Morgan and his reply follows them:

Linwood, North Carolina.

Though *Adventure* has been one of my many weaknesses or strong qualities for many seasons, this is my first time over with Camp-Fire and this because of a reference in the extracts of Col Morgan's letter to his journey to Batopilas, Mexico, with Gov. Shepherd of Washington, D. C., in 1880

I WAS along on that trip myself, but I can't say that my recollection of it is as clear as the Colonel's would be, for I was then rejoicing in the miniature collection of five years upon this earth, and at that I was not the youngest member of the party, for my "kid" brother Con was just three years old and my big buddie Alex not quite eight. All three of us, by the way, sons of Governor Shepherd.

In 1880, that was some trip from San Antonio, Texas, to Presidio del Norte on El Rio Grande and thence to Chihuahua in the old fashioned ambuances and wagons. Probably the only reason we ever got through was because my father had a letter from General Sherman to all post commanders and our journey was made via Concho, Ft. Davis, etc., and we went from post to post with a paymaster's escort. "El Apache" was active than and he had a few Comanches with him as well.

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We have all lived most of our lives in Mexico up to the Madero Revolution, when our camp had to shut down. Lord knows I would be back there now only a Heine machine-gunner shot away a considerable section of my abdominal wall during the Soissons drive July 18th. Yes, I was there. Commanded E Co., 2nd U. S. Infantry, 2nd Division. That's some honor, take it from me. Kind of an old bird, you will say. Well, only 42 when I enlisted at Ft. Meyer, Va., for first officers' training camp; passed up the Engineers as I thought my last experience (we all thought it would be our last) might as well see me in a front seat.

By the way, did you ever figure out what a lot of fool mining engineers there were commanding doughboys in that late unpleasantness? And they all made the grade and were muchly decorated by friend and foe as well.—GRANT SHEPHERD.

Newport News, Virginia.

In Camp-Fire of April 30 I saw an article by Col. James M. Morgan. I wish to greet an old comrade.

I WAS born in Caroline Co. Dec. 6, 1843. I enlisted in the Confederate Army in June, 1861. Was first stationed at Jamestown in August. Moved to Mulberry Island in August same year; stationed there until May 3rd when the Peninsula was evacuated. Reenlisted for the balance of the war. March 7th Capt. Tucker, in command of the James Fleet, came to the Battery and asked Col. Noland for the loan of the 18 volunteers to man an 11-in. Columbiad mounted in the bows of the *Patrick Henry*, the flagship of his fleet of three gunboats. Eighteen of the battery volunteered; I was one of them. The next day we moved down the river and met the *Merrimac* and helped sink the *Congress* and *Cumberland*. That night we went to Norfolk and accompanied the *Merrimac* and three gunboats down the river. The flotilla of gunboats lay off Crany Island and watched the fight between the *Monitor* and *Merrimac*. After the fight we went back to our Battery and stayed there until the evacuation, when I went to the cavalry and served under Gen. Fitz Lee to the end of the war. I was in all of the battles, both infantry and cavalry fights. Was wounded twice but not severely.

IN MARCH, 1865, I was sent for by President Davis, who asked me to go to Cumberland, Md., to get some quinine through the lines, as our soldiers were needing it very bad. As I had been scouting for some time for Gen. Fitz Lee, I took the job and was near Cumberland when I learned that the war was over. I surrendered in Richmond the 23rd of May.

There are three of the *Merrimac's* crew still living near here now. One of them belongs to Magruder Camp 36 of this city, of which I am Adjutant.—W. H. WARE, Co. D, 3rd Va. Cavl.

COLONEL MORGAN'S letter on receiving the two letters above:

Washington, District Columbia.

I thank you so much for letting me see the letters of Grant Shepherd and Mr. Ware.

On that memorable journey from San Antonio, Texas, to Batopilas, Mexico, Grant had an adventure which doubtless he remembers despite the fact that he was then only five years of age. It was in the year 1880 and the Apaches were causing great excitement both in Mexico and Texas at the time. After leaving Chihuahua, Mexico, we traveled in the ambulances to Santa Isabel, and there the party mounted mules, as that was the commencement of the journey across the Sierra Madre Mountains—as rough a ride at that time as well could be imagined, especially for Mrs. Shepherd and her young children, and it was also very hard on Governor Shepherd, who was a very large and heavy man totally unaccustomed to that kind of exercise.

AT ONE place the mountain trail led over a chasm about three hundred feet wide whose sides were connected by an embankment of rock only about two feet wide at the top in which holes had been made a little larger than the hoofs of the mules. These holes the mules carefully put their feet in while making the perilous crossing, for the sheer fall on one side was estimated to be about seven thousand feet and on the other some three thousand. I doubt if it would have made much difference to a fellow which side his mule fell off of.

Some of the party wanted to walk across but the Mexicans would not permit it as the mountain mules were so much more sure footed. The Mexicans placed Grant and his little brothers in front of them on their saddles and giving the mules, who had often made the crossing before, their heads, they passed over safely, but I must confess that, old sailor as I was, it made me dizzy to look down when it came my turn to perform on this permanent earthy, or rather rocky, makeshift for a tight-rope. The looking down and seeing turkey buzzards flying away above clouds which were pouring rain on the ground away below while it was bright sunshine at the altitude of our trail—I must confess that it was somewhat upsetting.

TALKING of adventures, the other day I accidently got into communication with a grandson of Captain Maffitt, the man who ran the C. S. Cruiser *Florida* into Mobile Bay while he was ill with the yellow fever and had himself brought on deck to pilot his ship through the United States fleet in broad daylight. His ship was badly cut up, but she got through. Young Mr. Maffit showed my letter to a Mr. James Sprunt of Wilmington, N. C., who at once wrote me that he had been the purser of the blockade runner *Lillian* when we made a wonderful escape from a big sloop-of-war which forced us among the breakers near the beach.

It seemed a miracle that the little *Lillian* was not grounded and wrecked, but we kept on, being short of coal, and having to make a port cost what it would. We reached the bar at Wilmington, N. C., just after daylight and had to take the broadsides of the whole blockading squadron as we went in. The *Lillian* was badly cut up and the end of one of her boilers had been carried away by a shell. In his official report in the Naval War records, Captain Ridgeley, of the Sloop-of-war *Shenandoah* (U.S.) says: "He was indeed a bold blockade runner. He kept the rebel flag flying until I lost him in the darkness. I fired one hundred and forty shot at him." The officers at Fort Fisher said it was the boldest dash they had yet seen.

I had thought I was the only survivor of that

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exciting episode, but here turns up a most prosperous cotton merchant in Wilmington who was attached to the little craft and who writes me that although an octogenarian like myself, he still thrills at the recollection of those shells tearing through our little ship, but above all remembers the qualms he experienced when we were rolling in the surf of those shark infested waters.

Mr. Sprunt has written several most interesting books—among them the "Chronicles of the Cape Fear River," and "Derelicts" which is filled with most interesting adventures of the blockade runners. Published by the Lord Baltimore Press, Baltimore, Md.—JAMES MORRIS MORGAN.

OUR Camp-Fire Stations are spreading steadily over the map. Help make them grow.

A STATION may be in any shop, home or other reputable place. The only requirements are that a Station shall display the regular Station sign, provide a box or drawer for mail to be called for and preserve the register book.

No responsibility for mail is assumed by anybody; the Station merely uses ordinary care. Entries in register to be confined to name or serial number, route, destination, permanent address and such other brief notes or remarks as desired; each Station can impose its own limit on space to be used. Registers become permanent property of Station; signs remain property of this magazine, so that if there is due cause of complaint from members a Station can be discontinued by withdrawing sign.

A Station bulletin-board is strongly to be recommended as almost necessary. On it travelers can leave tips as to conditions of trails, etc., resident members can post their names and addresses, such hospitality as they care to offer, calls for any travelers who are familiar with countries these residents once knew, calls for particular men if they happen that way, etc., notices or tips about local facilities and conditions. Letters to resident members can be posted on this bulletin board.

Any one who wishes is a member of Camp-Fire and therefore entitled to the above Station privileges subject to the Keeper's discretion. Those offering hospitality of any kind do so on their own responsibility and at their own risk and can therefore make any discriminations they see fit. Traveling members will naturally be expected to remember that they are merely guests and act accordingly.

Keepers answer letters only if they wish. For local information write "Ask Adventure."

A Station may offer only the required register and mail facilities or enlarge its scope to any degree it pleases. Its possibilities as headquarters for a local club of resident Camp Fire members are excellent.

The only connection between a Station and this magazine is that stated above, and a Keeper is in no other way responsible to this magazine nor representative of it.

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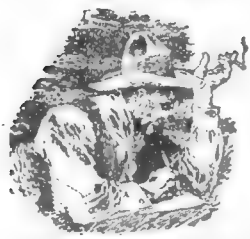

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2. **Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular section whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. Do NOT send questions to this magazine.**
3. **No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.**
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2. The Sea Part 2 British Waters
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, care *Adventure*. Seamanship, navigation, old-time sailorizing, ocean-cruising, etc. Questions on the sea, ships and men local to the British Empire go to Captain Dingle, not Mr. Brown.

3. The Sea Part 3 Statistics of American Shipping
HARRY E. RIESSERERG, Apt. 347-A, Kew Gardens, Washington, D. C. Historical records, tonnages, names and former names, dimensions, services, power, class, rig, builders, present and past ownerships, signals, etc., of all vessels of the American Merchant Marine and Government vessels in existence over five gross tons in the United States, Panama and the Philippines, and the furnishing of information and records of vessels under American registry as far back as 1760.

4. Islands and Coasts Part 1 Islands of Indian and Atlantic Oceans; the Mediterranean; Cape Horn and Magellan Straits
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, care *Adventure*. Ports, trade, peoples, travel. (*See next section.*)

5. Islands Part 2 Haiti, Santo Domingo, Porto Rico, Virgin and Jamaica Groups
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TOM L. MILLS, *The Feilding Star*, Feilding, New Zealand. Travel, history, customs; adventure, exploring, sport. (*Postage two cents.*)

7. South Sea Islands Part 2 French Oceania (Tahiti, the Society, Paumoto, Marquesas); Islands of Western Pacific (Solomons, New Hebrides, Fiji, Tonga); of Central Pacific (Guam, Ladrone, Pelew, Caroline, Marshall, Gilbert, Ellice); of the Detached (Wallis, Penrhyn, Danger, Easter, Rotuma, Futuna, Pitcairn).
CHARLES BROWN, JR., P. O. Box 308, San Francisco, Calif. Inhabitants, history, travel, sports, equipment, climate, living conditions, commerce, pearling, vanilla and coconut culture.

8. ★ Australia and Tasmania
PHILLIP NORMAN, 842 Military Rd., Mosman, Sydney, N. S. W., Australia. Customs, resources, travel, hunting, sports, history. (*Postage ten cents.*)

9. Malaysia, Sumatra and Java
FAY-COOPER COLE, Ph. D., Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago, Ill. Hunting and fishing, exploring, commerce, inhabitants, history, institutions.

10. ★ New Guinea
L. P. B. ARMIT, Port Moresby, Territory of Papua, via Sydney, Australia. Hunting and fishing, exploring, commerce, inhabitants, history, institutions. Questions regarding the measures or policy of the Government or proceedings of Government officers not answered. (*Postage ten cents.*)

11. Philippine Islands.
BUCK CONNOR, L. B. 4, Quartzsite, Ariz. History, inhabitants, topography, customs, travel, hunting, fishing, minerals, agriculture, commerce.

12. Hawaiian Islands and China
F. J. HALTON, 1402 Lytton Bldg., Chicago, Ill. Customs, travel, natural history, resources, agriculture, fishing, hunting.

13. Japan
GRACE P. T. KNUDSON, Castine, Me. Commerce, politics, people, customs, history, geography, travel, agriculture, art, curios.

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14. Asia Part 1 Arabia, Persia, India, Tibet, Burma, Western China, Borneo
CAPTAIN BEVERLEY GIDDINGS, care *Adventure*. Hunting, exploring, traveling, customs.

15. Asia Part 2 Siam, Andamans, Malay Straits, Straits Settlements, Shan States and Yunnan
GORDON MACCREAGH, 21 East 14th St., New York. Hunting, trading, traveling, customs.

16. Asia Part 3 Coast of Northeastern Siberia, and Adjoining Waters
CAPTAIN C. L. OLIVER, care *Adventure*. Natives, language, mining, trading, customs, climate. Arctic Ocean: Winds, currents, depths, ice conditions, walrus-hunting.

17. Asia Part 4 North China, Mongolia and Chinese Turkestan
GEORGE W. TWOMEY, M. D., 41 Rue de France, Tientsin, China. Natives, languages, trading, customs, climate and hunting.

18. Africa Part 1 Sierra Leone to Old Calabar, West Africa, Southern and Northern Nigeria
ROBERT SIMPSON, care *Adventure*. Labor, trade, expenses, outfitting, living conditions, tribal customs, transportation.

19. ✢ Africa Part 2 Transvaal, N. W. and Southern Rhodesia, British East, Uganda and the Upper Congo
CHARLES BEADLE, care Agence Cook et Fils, Nice, France. Geography, hunting, equipment, trading, climate, transport, customs, living conditions, witchcraft, adventure and sport.

20. Africa Part 3 Cape Colony, Orange River Colony, Natal and Zululand
CAPTAIN F. J. FRANKLIN, care Adventurers' Club of Chicago, 40 South Clark St., Chicago, Ill. Climate, shooting and fishing, imports and exports; health resorts, minerals, direct shipping routes from U. S., living conditions, travel, opportunities for employment. Free booklets on: Orange-growing, apple-growing, sugar-growing, maize-growing; viticulture; sheep and fruit ranching.

21. ✢ Africa Part 4 Portuguese East
R. G. WARING, Corunna, Ont., Canada. Trade, produce, climate, opportunities, game, wild life, travel, expenses, outfits, health, etc. (*Postage 3 cents.*)

22. Africa Part 5 Morocco
GEORGE E. HOLT, care *Adventure*. Travel, tribes, customs, history, topography, trade.

23. Africa Part 6 Tripoli
CAPTAIN BEVERLEY GIDDINGS, care *Adventure*. Including the Sahara Tuaregs and caravan routes. Traveling, exploring, customs, caravan trade.

24. Africa Part 7 Egypt, Tunis, Algeria
(Editor to be appointed.) Travel, history, ancient and modern; monuments, languages, races, customs, commerce.

25. Africa Part 8 Sudan
W. T. MOFFAT, 67 Burlington Road, Fulham, London, S.W. 6, England. Climate, prospects, trading, traveling, customs, history.

26. Turkey
J. F. EDWARDS, David Lane, East Hampton, N. Y. Travel, history, geography, politics, races, languages, customs, commerce, outdoor life, general information.

27. Asia Minor
(Editor to be appointed.)

28. Bulgaria, Roumania
(Editor to be appointed.) Travel, history, topography, languages, customs, trade opportunities.

29. Albania
ROBERT S. TOWNSEND, 1447 Irving St., Washington, D. C. History, politics, customs, languages, inhabitants, sports, travel, outdoor life.

30. Jugo-Slavia and Greece
LIEUT. WILLIAM JENNA, Plattsburg Barracks, New York. History, politics, customs, geography, language, travel, outdoor life.

31. Scandinavia
ROBERT S. TOWNSEND, 1447 Irving St., Washington, D. C. History, politics, customs, languages, inhabitants, sports, travel, outdoor life.

32. Germany, Czecho-Slovakia, Austria, Poland
FRED F. FLEISCHER, care *Adventure*. History, politics, customs, languages, trade opportunities, travel, sports, outdoor life.

33. Great Britain
THOMAS BOWEN PARTINGTON, Constitutional Club, Northumberland Ave., W. C. 2, London, England. General information.

34. South America Part 1 Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and Chile
EDGAR YOUNG, care *Adventure*. Geography, inhabitants, history, industries, topography, minerals, game, languages, customs.

35. South America Part 2 Venezuela, the Guianas and Brazil
WILLIAM R. BARBOUR, Room 423, Fisk Bldg., Broadway at 57th St., New York. Travel, history, customs, industries, topography, inhabitants, languages, hunting and fishing.

36. South America Part 3 Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay
WILLIAM R. BARBOUR, Room 423, Fisk Bldg., Broadway at 57th St., New York. Geography, travel, agriculture, cattle, timber, inhabitants, camping and exploration, general information. Questions regarding employment not answered.

37. Central America
CHARLES BELL EMERSON, Adventure Cabin, Los Gatos, Calif. Canal Zone, Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, British Honduras, Salvador, Guatemala. Travel, languages, game, conditions, minerals, trading.

38. Mexico Part 1 Northern
J. W. WHITAKER, 1505 W. 10th St. Austin, Tex. Border States of old Mexico—Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon and Tamaulipas. Minerals, lumbering, agriculture, travel, customs, topography, climate, inhabitants, hunting, history, industries.

39. Mexico Part 2 Southern; and Lower California
C. R. MAHAFFEY, care of Roadmaster, S. P. Co., San José, Calif. Lower California; Mexico south of a line from Tampico to Mazatlan. Mining, agriculture, topography, travel, hunting, lumbering, history, inhabitants, business and general conditions.

40. ✢ Canada Part 1 Height of Land, Region of Northern Quebec and Northern Ontario (except Strip between Minn. and C. P. Ry.); Southeastern Ungava and Keewatin
S. E. SANGSTER ("Canuck"), L. B. 393, Ottawa, Canada. Sport, canoe routes, big game, fish, fur; equipment; Indian life and habits; Hudson's Bay Co. posts; minerals, timber, customs regulations. No questions answered on trapping for profit. (*Postage 3 cents.*)

41. ✢ Canada Part 2 Ottawa Valley and Southeastern Ontario
HARRY M. MOORE, Deseronto, Ont., Canada. Fishing, hunting, canoeing, mining, lumbering, agriculture, topography, travel, camping. (*Postage 3 cents.*)

42. ✢ Canada Part 3 Georgian Bay and Southern Ontario
A. D. L. ROBINSON, 173 Maple Ave., Pembroke, Ont., Canada. Fishing, hunting, trapping, canoeing. (*Postage 3 cents.*)

43. Canada Part 4 Hunters Island and English River District
T. F. PHILLIPS, Department of Science, Duluth Central High School, Duluth, Minn. Fishing, camping, hunting, trapping, canoeing, climate, topography, travel.

44. Canada Part 5 Yukon, British Columbia and Alberta
(Editor to be appointed.) Including Peace River district; to Great Slave Lake. Outfits and equipment, guides, big game, minerals, forest, prairie; travel; customs regulations.

45. ✢ Canada Part 6 Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Mackenzie and Northern Keewatin
REECE H. HAGUE, The Pas, Manitoba, Canada. Homesteading, mining, hunting, trapping, lumbering and travel. (*Postage 3 cents.*)

46. ✢ Canada Part 7 New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Southeastern Quebec
JAS. F. B. BELFORD, Codrington, Ont., Canada. Hunting, fishing, lumbering, camping, trapping, auto and canoe trips, history, topography, farming, homesteading, mining, paper industry, water-power. (*Postage 3 cents.*)

47. Alaska
THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, Larkspur, Calif. Arctic life and travel; boats, packing, back-packing, traction, transport, routes; equipment, clothing, food; physics, hygiene; mountain work.

48. Baffinland and Greenland
VICTOR SHAW, Ketchikan, Alaska. Hunting, expeditions, dog-team work, whaling, geology, ethnology (Eskimo).

49. Western U. S. Part 1 Calif., Ore., Wash., Nev., Utah and Ariz.
E. E. HARRIMAN, 2303 W. 23rd St., Los Angeles, Calif. Game, fur, fish; camp, cabin; mines, minerals; mountains.

50. Western U. S. Part 2 New Mexico
H. F. ROBINSON, 200-202 Korber Block, Albuquerque, N. M. Agriculture, automobile routes, Indians, Indian dances, including the snake dance, oil-fields, hunting, fishing, camping; history, early and modern.

51. Western U. S. Part 3 Colo. and Wyo.
FRANK MIDDLETON, 509 Prémont St., Laramie, Wyo. Geography, agriculture, stock-raising, mining, hunting, fishing, trapping, camping and outdoor life in general.

52. Western U. S. Part 4 Mont. and the Northern Rocky Mountains.
CHESTER C. DAVIS, Helena, Mont. Agriculture, mining, northwestern oil-fields, hunting, fishing, camping, automobile tours, guides, early history.

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53. Western U. S. Part 5 Idaho and Surrounding Country
R. T. Newman, Box 833, Anaconda, Mont. Camping, shooting, fishing, equipment, information on expeditions, history and inhabitants.

54. Western U. S. Part 6 Tex. and Okla.
J. W. Whitaker, 1505 W. 10th St., Austin, Tex. Minerals, agriculture, travel, topography, climate, hunting, history, industries.

55. Middle Western U. S. Part 1 The Dakotas, Neb., Ia., Kan.
Joseph Mills Hanson (lately Capt. A. E. F.), care *Adventure*. Hunting, fishing, travel. Especially, early history of Missouri Valley.

56. Middle Western U. S. Part 2 Mo. and Ark.
John B. Thompson ("Ozark Ripley"), care of *Adventure*. Also the Missouri Valley up to Sioux City, Iowa. Wilder countries of the Ozarks, and swamps; hunting, fishing, trapping, farming, mining and range lands; big-timber sections.

57. Middle Western U. S. Part 3 Ind., Ill., Mich., Wis., Minn. and Lake Michigan
John B. Thompson ("Ozark Ripley"), care of *Adventure*. Fishing, clamming, hunting, trapping, lumbering, canoeing, camping, guides, outfits, motoring, agriculture, minerals, natural history, early history, legends.

58. Middle Western U. S. Part 4 Mississippi River
Geo. A. Zerr, Vine and Hill Sts., Crafton P. O., Ingram, Pa. Routes, connections, itineraries; all phases of river steamer and power-boat travel; history and idiosyncrasies of the river and its tributaries. Questions regarding methods of working one's way should be addressed to Mr. Spears. (*See next section.*)

59. Eastern U. S. Part 1 Miss., O., Tenn., Michigan and Hudson Valleys, Great Lakes, Adirondacks
Raymond S. Spears, Inglewood, Calif. Automobile, motor-cycle, bicycle and pedestrian touring; shanty-boating, river-tripping; outfit suggestions, including those for the transcontinental trails; game, fish and woodcraft; furs, fresh-water pearls, herbs.

60. Eastern U. S. Part 2 Motor-Boat and Canoe Cruising on Delaware and Chesapeake Bays and Tributary Rivers
Howard A. Shannon, care *Adventure*. Motor-boat equipment and management. Oystering, crabbing, seling, black bass, pike, sea-trout, croakers; general fishing in tidal waters. Trapping and trucking on Chesapeake Bay. Water fowl and upland game in Maryland and Virginia. Early history of Delaware, Virginia and Maryland.

61. Eastern U. S. Part 3 Marshes and Swamplands of the Atlantic Coast from Philadelphia to Jacksonville
Howard A. Shannon, care *Adventure*. Okefinokee and Dismal, Okranoke and the Marshes of Glynn; Croatan Indians of the Carolinas. History, traditions, customs, hunting, modes of travel, snakes.

62. Eastern U. S. Part 4 Southern Appalachians
William R. Barbour, Room 423, Fisk Bldg., Broadway at 57th St., New York. Allgehanies, Blue Ridge, Smokies, Cumberland Plateau, Highland Rim. Topography, climate, timber, hunting and fishing, automobiling, national forests, general information.

63. Eastern U. S. Part 5 Tenn., Ala. Miss., N. and S. C., Fla. and Ga.
Hapsburg Liebe, Box 432, Orlando, Fla. Except Tennessee River and Atlantic seaboard. Hunting, fishing, camping; logging, lumbering, sawmilling, saws.

64. Eastern U. S. Part 6 Maine
Dr. G. E. Hathorne, 70 Main St., Bangor, Me. Fishing, hunting, canoeing, guides, outfits, supplies.

A.—Radio

Donald McNicol, 132 Union Road, Roselle Park, N. J. Telegraphy, telephony, history, broadcasting, apparatus, invention, receiver construction, portable sets.

B.—Mining and Prospecting

Victor Shaw, Ketchikan, Alaska. Territory anywhere on the continent of North America. Questions on mines, mining law, mining, mining methods or practise; where and how to prospect, how to outfit; how to make the mine after it is located; how to work it and how to sell it; general geology necessary for miner or prospector, including the precious and base metals and economic minerals such as pitchblende or uranium, gypsum, mica, cryolite, etc. Questions regarding investment or the merits of any particular company are excluded.

C.—Old Songs That Men Have Sung

A department for collecting hitherto unpublished specimens and for answering questions concerning all songs of the out-of-doors that have had sufficient virility to outlast their immediate day; chanteys, "forebitters," ballads —songs of outdoor men—sailors, lumberjacks, soldiers, cowboys, pioneers, rivermen, canal-men, men of the Great Lakes, voyageurs, railroad men, miners, hoboes, plantation hands, etc.—R. W. Gordon, 1262 Euclid Ave., Berkeley, Calif.

D.—Weapons, Past and Present

Rifles, shotguns, pistols, revolvers, ammunition and edged weapons. (Any questions on the arms adapted to a particular locality should *not* be sent to this department but to the "Ask Adventure" editor covering the district.)

1.—All Shotguns, including foreign and American makes; wing shooting. John B. Thompson ("Ozark Ripley"), care of *Adventure*.

2.—All Rifles, Pistols and Revolvers, including foreign and American makes. Donegan Wiggins, R. F. D. 3, Lock Box 75, Salem, Ore.

3.—Edged Weapons, and Firearms Prior to 1900. Swords, pikes, knives, battle-axes, etc., and all firearms of the flintlock, matchlock, wheel-lock and snaphaunce varieties. Lewis Appleton Barker, 40 University Road, Brookline, Mass.

E.—Salt and Fresh Water Fishing

John B. Thompson ("Ozark Ripley"), care of *Adventure*. Fishing-tackle and equipment; fly and bait casting and bait; camping-outfits; fishing-trips.

F.—Forestry in the United States

Ernest W. Shaw, South Carver, Mass. Big-game hunting, guides and equipment; national forests of the Rocky Mountain States. Questions on the policy of the Government regarding game and wild-animal life in the forests.

G.—Tropical Forestry

William R. Barbour, Room 423, Fisk Bldg., Broadway at 57th St., New York. Tropical forests and forest products; their economic possibilities; distribution, exploitation, etc.

H.—Aviation

Lieut.-Col. W. G. Schauffler, Jr., 2940 Newark St., N. W., Washington, D. C. Airplanes; airships; aeronautical motors; airways and landing fields; contests; Aero Clubs; insurance; aeronautical laws; licenses; operating data; schools; foreign activities; publications. No questions answered regarding aeronautical stock-promotion companies.

I.—Army Matters, United States and Foreign

Fred. F. Fleischer, care *Adventure*. *United States:* Military history, Military policy. National Defense Act of 1920. Regulations and matters in general for organized reserves. Army and uniform regulations, infantry drill regulations, field service regulations. Tables of organization. Citizens' military training camps. *Foreign:* Strength and distribution of foreign armies before the war. Uniforms. Strength of foreign armies up to date. History of armies of countries covered by Mr. Fleischer in general, "Ask Adventure" section. *General:* Tactical questions on the late war. Detailed information on all operations during the late war from the viewpoint of the German high command. Questions regarding enlisted personnel and officers, except such as are published in Officers' Directory, can not be answered.

J.—American Anthropology North of the Panama Canal

Arthur Woodward, 217 W. 125th St., New York. Customs, dress, architecture, pottery and decorative arts, weapons and implements, fetishism, social divisions.

K.—First Aid on the Trail

Claude P. Fordyce, M. D., Falls City, Neb. Medical and surgical emergency care, wounds, injuries, common illnesses, diet, pure water, clothing, insect and snake-bite; industrial first aid and sanitation for mines, logging camps, ranches and exploring parties as well as for camping trips of all kinds. First-aid outfits. Meeting all health hazards of the outdoor life, arctic, temperate and tropical zones.

L.—Health-Building Outdoors

Claude P. Fordyce, M. D., Falls City, Neb. How to get well and how to keep well in the open air, where to go and how to travel. Tropical hygiene. General health-building, safe exercise, right food and habits, with as much adaptation as possible to particular cases.

M.—STANDING INFORMATION

For Camp-Fire Stations write J. Cox, care *Adventure*.
For general information on U. S. and its possessions,

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write Supt. of Public Documents, Wash, D. C., for catalog of all Government publications. For U. S., its possessions and most foreign countries, the Dept. of Com., Wash., D. C.

For the Philippines, Porto Rico, and customs receiverships in Santo Domingo and Haiti, the Bureau of Insular Affairs, War Dept., Wash., D. C.

For Alaska, the Alaska Bureau, Chamber of Commerce, Central Bldg., Seattle, Wash.

For Hawaii, Hawaii Promotion Committee, Chamber of Commerce, Honolulu, T. H. Also, Dept. of the Interior, Wash., D. C.

For Cuba, Bureau of Information, Dept. of Agri., Com. and Labor, Havana, Cuba.

The Pan-American Union for general information on Latin-American matters or for specific data. Address L. S. Rowe, Dir. Gen., Wash., D. C.

For R. C. M. P., Commissioner Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Ottawa, Can. Only unmarried British subjects, age 18 to 40, above 5 ft. 8 in. and under 175 lbs.

For Canal Zone, the Panama Canal Com., Wash., D. C.

National Rifle Association of America, Brig. Gen. Fred H. Phillips, Jr., Sec'y, 1108 Woodward Bldg., Wash., D. C.

United States Revolver Ass'n. W. A. Morrall, Sec'y-Treas., Hotel Virginia, Columbus, O.

National parks, how to get there and what to do when there. Address National Park Service, Washington, D. C.

Notes from "A. A." Men

THE following correspondence is printed at the request of Lieut. Frederick F. Fleischer, "Ask Adventure" expert in charge of Army Matters, United States and Foreign. The accuracy of Lieut. Fleischer's information is assailed, and naturally he resents it. The letter to which Lieut. Fleischer's correspondent refers gave credit to the Austrian general Conrad von Hötzendorf for the successful Austro-German offensive at Gorlice in 1915, for which the Germans have been taking all the glory:

Louisville, Ky.

Fred F. Fleischer—*Dear Sir:*

As a constant reader of *Adventure* I naturally run across your personal column and what you call "information." Now in the July 10th, 1924, issue you reach about the top of your personal ego.

"Yes, I have inside dope. Lots of it."

That sounds as if you had been at the head of General Headquarters. However, your information shows that only an imbecile, a know-nothing, would take stock in your "inside dope." I read your personal history, and I hope in about a month I will know more about it as I have been writing to Austria for "inside dope." I have no prejudice against you, only if you would be a little more careful in your statements, it would not hurt.

Hötzendorf was an able leader but had very poor support, and as far as I can remember, on either front the Austro-Hungarian Army could not make any headway until the Germans came. It does not make any difference who conceived the plan of attack—give Hötzendorf due credit—but there was a handicap for that man somewhere, and I am sure it was not the German staff who was to blame for the reverses the Austrian Army suffered on all fronts.

Yours truly for fair and impartial information.

To this letter Lieut. Fleischer replied as follows:

My Dear Mr. ——:

Your amazing letter has duly reached me, and after reading it several times I am still at a loss to know just what you are kicking about.

Frankly it appears to me that you are somewhat chagrined over the fact that I have stated that I have "inside dope," which I hereby confirm and underline, and that I have championed the cause of the much maligned Austrian Army instead of praising the German hosts.

I take your statement that you have no prejudice against me at face value but strongly object to your calling, in a way, the readers of *Adventure* imbeciles and know-nothings.

I further object to your insinuation that "what I call information" is not such and "what I call inside dope" is not of that designation. Furthermore, and knowing Germans as I do, you have apparently been unable to shed a national trait of *dreckige Hintergedanken*—in English "dirty thoughts in the back of one's head" as indicated by your statement of writing to Austria for "information."

Let me clear this up before I prove to you that you are all wrong and on the wrong track. My life abroad and here is an open book. There are not less than a dozen of people from my home town here in New York, six of whom went to school with me and have known me all my life.

To Austria I am unknown. To Bohemia, well known. I am perfectly willing, without any reservations, to give you any number of addresses abroad where you may obtain any information about me that you desire to have. That's that.

Now that I am through personally, let's get back to the "A. A." sections which I have the privilege to edit.

No information which I have so far supplied in scores of letters, few of which have been published, has ever been questioned by any one, with one exception. This was a question of duty on motorcycles in France, which information I received here in New York and passed on without guarantee. A reader of the magazine in France wrote to me correcting the dope.

As far as the military information is concerned, my information when given is official as far as our Army is concerned; and when it is in connection with the War of 1914-1918 comes from sources which you neither have knowledge nor can dream of the existence of. My inside dope, as I termed it, consists of published and unpublished statements and oral information I receive from time to time, whenever I need it, from staff officers of either the German or Austrian Army, who are now in New York or vicinity.

I am convinced, and in time it will become history, that while Falkenhayn was Chief of Staff of the German Army not one sound theory ever originated in his conceited brain. Neither Gorlice, the Roumanian campaign, the Servian campaign nor the Italian offensive originated with him. He merely used the brain children of others, his mental superiors by far. The only thing he ever did was to instigate the Verdun offensive, which upon analysis proved to be the key to Germany's defeat.

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Your statement that the Austrian Army made no headway until the Germans came evoked a storm of laughter when I showed your letter to several military experts. It only convinces me that you also fell for German world propaganda, which aimed to show the world that a German can not make a mistake and if such were made, they were of Austrian origin. You are not sure of your ground, but I am and must be because there is no circle of readers more exacting than those of *Adventure*, and my statements are checked up very closely as numerous letters to me show. These letters are never printed, because the magazine does not have to "blow its own horn."

THERE were certain elements in the makeup of the Austrian Army which, from the very beginning, proved a tremendous handicap. The fact that Austria saved Germany's back door in the East at the beginning of the war counted heavily as she did not hesitate to attack the Russians, who were several times stronger in numbers, and held them until Germany's line in France was established and she could breathe free. It took away the flower of the Austrian Army—but it closed the road to Berlin. The accomplishments which could be expected from an Army which was a national unit, could not be expected from an Army which contained eighteen nationalities, each one seeking a separate goal. That Austria was able to survive four years and still start an offensive in 1918 was a miracle.

Gen. Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf, were he placed in command of all armies of the Central Powers, would have been the "man" to win the war prior to our entry into the war, but he was too modest, too unselfish to place himself continually into the limelight as his German colleagues did.

To conclude: Just point out to me where I am wrong and then prove to me that you are right. Convince me that I am not careful in my statements, and that they are not in accordance with facts and that you can do better and I gladly step down and recommend you for my job. That's fair, isn't it?

And another thing I am willing to do for you: Ask me for it and I will give you a list of books in several languages, including a round hundred printed in German, from which you will take information which, I venture to say, will give you some insight into the "inside dope" on the war from a German viewpoint, on a scale which will make the hairs on your spine bristle. My library is almost complete on these subjects, and I count the expense in getting these books as well invested.

I am absolutely impartial in my statements; but I am relentless where truth is concerned, and I have never beaten around the bush in saying publicly that I never had and never will have any use for a certain class of Germans which have infested every corner of the earth wherever I happened to be and which proved to be the undoing of a people whose accomplishments in art, science, literature and music I value just as much as every clear-thinking person would. We may have "one nigger in the woodpile," but in Germany of 1914 there was half of Africa.

Kindly note that I am forwarding your letter and my reply to the editor of *Adventure* with the request that same be placed before the readers.

—Frederick F. Fleischer.

A LITTLE note of correction from the "A. A." expert on rifles, pistols and revolvers:

Salem, Ore.

Some time in 1923 I made through the "A. A." department, and in reply to a gentleman in New England, the statement that the carbines used by General Custer's command at the Battle of the Little Big Horn, where they were annihilated, were the old rim-fire Spencer repeaters. I was led to this belief by the statements of men who were in the Northwest at that time, and by the fact that a correspondent of mine has a Spencer carbine, purchased from an Indian who claimed that he got it from that battlefield.

Recently, however, I have had the pleasure of reading, through the courtesy of our friend E. E. Brininstool of Los Angeles, Calif., a letter from one of the surviving officers of the 7th Cavalry, who was in the battle and on the hill with the remains of Reno's command. He stated in this letter that the carbines were the regular Springfields, the old flip-up breech model now being sold so cheaply by Army stores, and that they used the rifle ammunition.

This settles the matter of course. I knew the Spencer was adopted by the cavalry during the latter part of the Civil War, and was used during the earlier plains fighting, but did not suppose it was retired till 1876 or 1877.

The Spencer was by no means the reliable arm the Winchester and Henry repeaters were, and its ballistics were very poor compared to even the better grade of muzzle loaders. But for short range when the ejector worked perfectly it was a killer and no mistake. But the rim-fire cartridges with outside lubrication were very prone to stick in the barrel, and I don't wonder at its rejection when a better carbine was available.—Dorrance Wiggins.

The full statement of the sections, as given in this issue, is printed only in alternate issues.

When the Radio "Whistles"

TRANS-ATLANTIC work can not be done without special apparatus:

Question:—"Enclosed please find diagram of a radio I have just completed, and I would be pleased to have you examine same and criticize it if agreeable to do so. I have tried to operate it but I do not meet with much success. In order to help me out will you not please answer the following questions:

When I tune in high-powered wireless stations I have a sort of whistling indicative of the closeness of the tuning. Should I observe the same thing, or is the same thing to be observed when tuning in radio broadcasting? In other words, are radio broadcasting stations supposed to produce similar effects when tuning in?

Does the fact that I can tune in wireless broadcasting indicate that my set is operating at maximum efficiency? If not would you not please suggest how to arrive at good adjustments and make satisfactory tests?

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Twice I unexpectedly heard human voices very clear and distinct; but I lost same, and no trying could tune it in again. In the last case I was tuning in what I noted to be a wireless broadcasting when out of a clear sky as it were I heard this voice. It was what I thought the closing remarks of W G Y announcer.

Could you help me out in determing the exact point at which to set the potential on the grid? The same about the variable grid leaks? Same question about the plate battery potentiometer?

Is the pointing of loop or its direction very critical?

I have no success in operating tubes at dull glow. What does this signify?

At the two highest ranges of the C. C. transformer, if I put out current of No. 1 R. T. bulb I hear awful howling in the second tube which disappears when No. 1 bulb is again lighted. What would this indicate—wrong adjustments or oscillations?

When are tubes oscillating? How to determine oscillations and correct them?

All leads from transformers are connected with insulated wire, leads to rheostats are lamp cord. The rest is connected with bus bar. Is this proper? Insulated wire is that generally used in house wiring.

The whole is mounted in a wooden cabinet 7 inches high, 10½ inches deep, 18 inches wide.

These are perhaps strange questions to ask, but not if you take into consideration the fact that I do not know anything at all about radio telephony. This hookup I made up from circulars showing possible connections of the respective goods advertised therein.

If, disregarding my questions, you can write such adjusting and operating advice covering such help as I am looking for please do so by all means.

What range (distance) should this set cover under fair conditions?

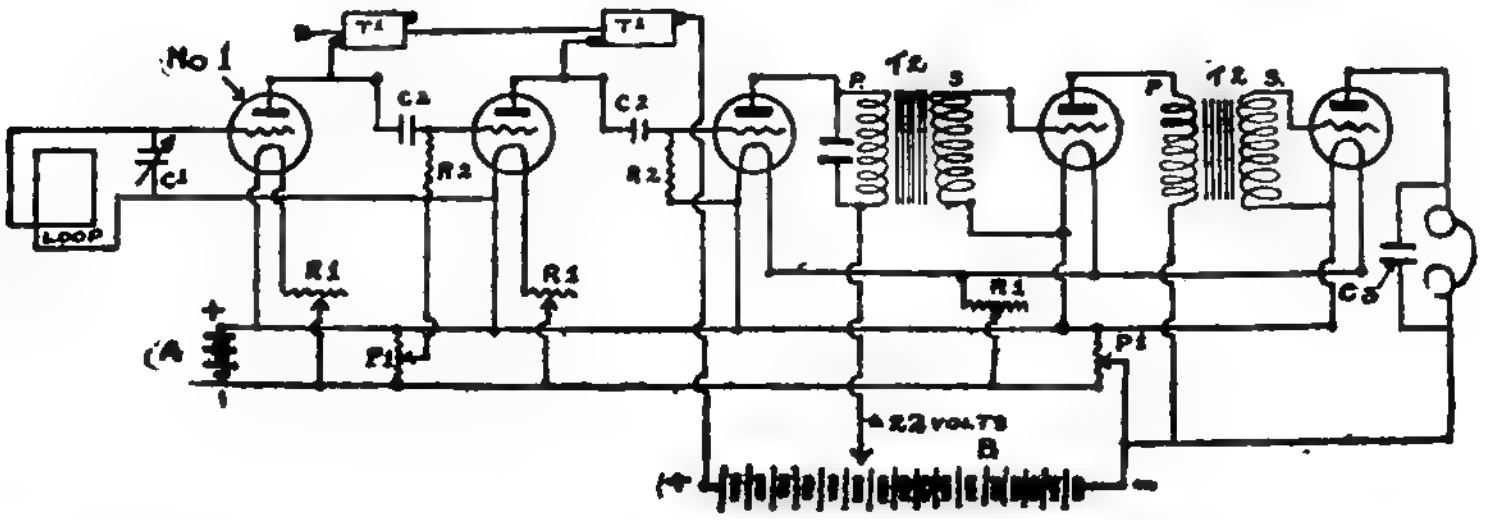
I thank you in advance for your reply and express at the same time my gratefulness to *Adventure* for the opportunity of seeking expert advice.

Thanks."—J. A. ARCHAMBAULT. Brattleboro, Vt.

Answer, by Mr. McNicol:—You say the set "whistles" when you tune in high-power wireless stations. Do you mean trans-Atlantic radio-telegraph stations? These work on 18,000 to 20,000 meter waves and it is not possible to pick up these stations properly without special apparatus. In New York the receiving-station for European signals has an antenna nine miles long.

If your set is of the customary radiophone broadcasting wiring and set for 1,000 meters or less you can make it operate without whistling. I can not tell without knowing what kind of a receiving-set you have what your difficulty is. Can you send me a sketch of it?

If the sketch you do send is that of your present set I may say that your chances of getting radiophone broadcasting will be better if you put up a 100-foot-long outdoor antenna and 50 feet or more high in place of the loop. Try this, and if you still have no success send me a list of the apparatus parts you have and I can tell you how best to hook them up.



LOOP—4 FT. SQUARE 4 TURNS NO. 28 D.C. WIRE
C1—VARIABLE CONDENSER .00025 WITH VERNIER
C2—.00025 FIXED CONDENSERS
C3—.0015 " "
C4—.005 " "
R1—RHEOSTATS 30 OHMS
A—"A" BATTERY 3 NO. 6 DRY CELLS IN SERIES
P1—POTENTIOMETER (FRAMINGHAMS)
R2—GRID LEAK
T1—COTO COIL TRANSFORMERS
T2—ACME AUDIO
B—BATTERIES 3 22-VOLT BATTERIES

If you don't want an answer enough to enclose FULL return postage to carry it, you don't want it.

The Windless Land of Gold

IT'S off by the Okhotsk Sea:

Question:—"I am writing you in regard to conditions in and about the coast of Siberia. Am planning to start this Fall with a small car and one other party on a tour to the coast. We read in one of the Boston papers an account of a gentleman, who has just returned from that territory, who is very lavish in his praise as to opportunities in that country. He claims that the climate is no more rigorous than that of Massachusetts and that the snowfall is not as heavy as in Canada. Possibly he refers to the southern part of Siberia and not to the coastal region. We have mapped out a trip that will eventually bring us up into Alaska, and we plan to cross over by boat to the Asian coast if there is any possibility of getting into some enterprise that will bring us in good returns.

Now as to mining there. What are the chief metals that one could mine in that country, and

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could two foreigners go there unacquainted with the country and the language and get any encouragement from the local authorities where one wished to settle? What are climatic conditions there, and in what part of the country should one settle in order to strike the best district for mining?

Are there any chances for trapping, and could one get permission either to mine or trap in that country? Have done some trapping on small scale, but we are both ignorant as regards mining operations.

What about living conditions there? Are the people civilized along the coastal territory, and are they friendly to foreigners? Have heard that the present Government does not allow foreigners to take money out of the country without payment of heavy tax and that the laws are very strict regarding aliens."—E. C. BROOKS, Rockland, Me.

Answer, by Capt. Oliver:—What the gentleman said about the climate and opportunities is true. Siberia is noted for its windlessness, which makes Summer the worst season because it is uncomfortably warm at times with many mosquitoes. Of course along the north, which is nothing but tundra anyway, you will find it rather cold, and the only way to make good there is by trapping and trading.

Gold placer-mining is about the most profitable. This combined with trapping should yield big for any one who understood both.

Foreigners receive neither encouragement nor otherwise from the authorities. All they ask is that one comply with their laws.

It is generally agreed that the land adjoining the western shore of the Okhotsk Sea is the best for placer-mining. If you wish to prospect it is necessary only to register, and you may take up and work a claim for thirty-six years by paying the Soviet Government an eight per cent. royalty.

The natives along the coast are very friendly, but according to the accepted meaning of the word you could not consider them civilized, although I'd sooner leave my purse lying around loose over there than in some of our most civilized centers. They are thoroughly honest, hospitable and readily respond to good treatment.

I am going into just this territory this Summer; and if you are still interested, write me again this Fall and I shall have the latest for you.

Address your question direct to the expert in charge, NOT to the magazine.

Canoeing, Georgian Bay to New York

A NEW route for a Summer trip:

Question:—"We are thinking of taking a canoe trip from Georgian Bay to Lake Nipissing and down the Ottawa River, some time this Summer.

We are writing to you to please give us all information that can be had on such a trip. Among the things we would like to know are fishing, rapids and fast water, carries and towns en route, and what part of Summer is the best to make such a trip.

Also would you send us a complete map for this trip, and if there are any costs attached to same please let us know and we will forward necessary amount.

We are intending to go from Georgian Bay to Nipissing, then down the Ottawa to the St. Lawrence and through into Champlain Lake and canal to the Hudson and down to New York. We know the route from the St. Lawrence down, but know nothing of the upper part mentioned."—BERT COE, Bayside, L. I., N. Y.

Answer, by Mr. Moore:—You are going up the French River to Lake Nipissing and over the hill to the Ottawa. I'm not sure you can make the Ottawa without portaging, but once you hit the big stream you will be all right—going down. I'd prefer to think, though, that when you come to the fast water in this river you will do some walking. Life is dear.

Your town will be North Bay; you can get to Mattawa, Pembroke, Arnprior, Ottawa City, etc., etc. There are several smaller places in between. You will find long stretches, particularly above Pembroke, where people are scarce; but you will more than make up for that down below. You will find, as I say, lots of rapids; you will have to go through a couple of canals before reaching the St. Lawrence; but, man, it is a trip!

Best time to make the trip is in mid-Summer. Bass, 'lunge, trout and all the other game fish are then in season. You can not hunt, for our seasons do not open until November. I would advise you to take lots of some good fly ointment; the flies are pretty bad at times in the upper country.

For maps send to J. E. Chalifour, Chief Geographer, Department of the Interior, Ottawa. Ask for the North Bay, the Pembroke and the Ottawa *Sheets* of the Topographical Survey Map. These sheets will cost you ten cents each, but they are the best maps that I know of.

Here's hoping you have a fine time.

When you get something for nothing, don't make the other fellow pay the postage on it.

The Supercargo's Job

AN OVERCROWDED occupation if not combined with that of wireless man—and sometimes overcrowded even then:

Question:—"What qualifications are necessary to hold the position of supercargo?

Through what channels must application for this position be made?

I am twenty-eight years of age, a graduate of Union College (Class of '15) in Schenectady, N. Y., have spent one year in Army and two at sea as an ordinary seaman; can run a typewriter, but have had very little business experience. Do you consider that an average fellow with these qualifications could satisfactorily discharge the duties of a supercargo?

I thank you for your courtesy in this matter." BARLOW T. LOOMIS, Unadilla, N. Y.

Answer, by Mr. B. Brown:—The rating of supercargo, which had been obsolete, was revived by the Shipping Board. The supercargoes on the Shipping Board vessels which were operated by private companies did the paper work and kept the accounts of the ship and were the representatives of the Shipping Board. All of these Shipping-Board supercargoes were appointed after stiff competitive examinations, and there were more men qualified than

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there were billets to fill. I have not heard of any examinations having been held since the first of them.

However, to relieve the captains of freight vessels of their paper work quite a number of steamship lines have adopted the supercargo system, but putting that work on the wireless operator, whose other duties are not very onerous. Three to six months' study in a wireless school and ability to send or receive twenty words a minute will qualify you for license as wireless operator, with which qualification you might get a chance with some of the companies operating freighters that have installed the supercargo-wireless system.

A two-cent stamp won't carry everywhere.

World's Largest White-Pine Forest

IT's located in Idaho, along with a lot of other wonders:

Question:—"I am a member of the geography class in Lindblom High School. I have been asked to write a semester report of any State in the Union. I have chosen Idaho, and through the *Adventure* magazine I have found out that I could get information from you.

Would you please send me any information of any shape about the history, inhabitants or railroads, mines and so forth. Please send me a pamphlet of the counties of Idaho. I hope I have not asked for too much."—MISS SADIE BERKMAN, Chicago, Ill.

Answer, by Mr. Newman:—I take pleasure in sending you under separate cover two books on the State of Idaho, giving you most of the counties and information asked for in order to help you make your semester report. You can also say the following:

More fine school-houses in Idaho for a given population than in any other State in the Union.

Idaho is the healthiest State in the Union according to the United States Census Bureau.

Largest white-pine forest in the world.

The Idaho potato is queen of the American table.

Idaho takes seven of the most important crops according to the United States Department of Agriculture. Idaho, Nature's treasure chest!

For additional information if needed, I would advise you to write to the different chambers of commerce, at such cities as Idaho Falls, Twin Falls, Boise, Bonner's Ferry, Orofino, Wallace, Nampa, Moscow, Payette, Caldwell, Blackfoot, Cœur D'Alene, Rexburg, Rupert and Lewiston. These chambers of commerce are active in furnishing literature. Or you may call upon the city passenger agent of the C., M. & St. P. Ry., 620 Marquette Building, Chicago, or the general agent of the Northern Pacific Ry., 226 West Adams St., Chicago. Both can give you other booklets and advertising matter on the State of Idaho.

Address your question direct to the expert in charge, NOT to the magazine.

"ASK ADVENTURE" editors are appointed with extreme care. If you can meet our exacting requirements and qualify as an expert on some topic or territory not now covered, we shall be glad to talk matters over with you. Address F. K. NOYES, *Adventure*, New York.

LOST TRAILS

NOTE—We offer this department of the "Camp-Fire" free of charge to those of our readers who wish to get in touch again with old friends or acquaintances from whom the years have separated them. For the benefit of the friend you seek, *give your own name if possible*. All inquiries along this line, unless containing contrary instructions, will be considered as intended for publication in full with inquirer's name, in this department, at our discretion. We reserve the right in case inquirer refuses his name, to substitute any numbers or other names, to reject any item that seems to us unsuitable, and to use our discretion in all matters pertaining to this department. Give also your own full address. We will, however, forward mail through this office, assuming no responsibility therefor. We have arranged with the Montreal *Star* to give additional publication in their "Missing Relative Column," weekly and daily editions, to any of our inquiries for persons last heard of in Canada. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

NEWTON, LUCY CAROLINE MISS and Father. Residents of Camden, N. J. Supposed to have died in that city in seventies or eighties. Any information will be appreciated.—Address MRS. CHARLES A. EDWARDS, Highlands Farms, Chester Depot, Vermont.

SMITS, FRED H. Was in the Army in the Philippines. Discharged October 27, 1923, at Fort McDowell, Calif. About five feet ten inches tall, medium brown hair, blue eyes, one front tooth broken. May be cowpunching around Bakersfield. Any information will be appreciated.—Address MISS LOUISE SMITS, R. 5, Box 64, Anaheim, Calif.

A LIST of unclaimed manuscripts will be published in the January 30th and July 30th issues of Adventure, and a list of unclaimed mail will be published in the last issue of each month.

PHILLIPS, FRED DILLARD. Age about forty-two years, height five feet, 8 inches, black hair, dark blue eyes. Printer. Served with regulars. Has mother, and sister by the name of Daisy, somewhere in Florida. Last heard of when he was on his way to Florida. "Fred, your wife and her father are dead. Your children are anxious to find you."—Address MRS. WM. COBB, care of *Adventure*.

Inquiries will be printed three times, then taken out. In the February 10th issue all unfound names asked for during the past two years will be reprinted alphabetically.

EAMS, RALPH. Born in Lester, England. Sailed on the S. S. *Standard* of Bayonne in 1920. Any information will be appreciated by his friend "James Wild," of Trenton, N. J.

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HUBBARD, WILLIAM AUGUSTUS. Age forty-six, height about six feet, dark hair and eyes. Enlisted in the army for Spanish-American war, was discharged at Galveston, Texas. Re-enlisted in regular army and served with the 9th Infantry at Fort Tanana, Alaska. Last heard of about nineteen years ago. Any information will be appreciated.—Address A. G. HUBBARD, 1602 Avenue L., Galveston, Texas.

EDMUND, K. B. "All forgiven. Bad news about your family. Bobby died. Mother very sick. Come at once."—Address WATSON.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

HANKEY, EDWARD A. Resident of Euclid Ave., Cleveland, Ohio. Business address Fifth Ave. and Seventeenth St., New York City. Born August 8, 1874. Is now probably in Scranton, Pa. Any information will be appreciated.—Address THE PRUDENTIAL INSURANCE COMPANY, Newark, N. J.

MCKELBERG, A. J. Write to Mother and Helen at once. Everything O. K. Important news.—Address DAD.

GIBBS, WILLIAM H. Had charge of steam shovels at a strip coal mine at Wabash, Ohio, in November, 1921, when last heard from. Age forty-three, about five feet, ten inches tall, weight one hundred sixty pounds. Come or write.—Address WHITFIELD GIBBS, 6 Church St., Newton, N. J.

HOWELL, JAMES EDGAR. Your grandfather is dead, need you to settle up the estate. Any information will be appreciated.—Address C. N. HOWELL, 4323 E. 9th St., Kansas City, Mo.

MURPHY, GEORGE. Your old pal "Dave," of Canon City, would like to hear from you.—Address DAVE SANDERS, Gen. Del., Denton, Texas.

UNCLAIMED MAIL

DRAKE, JEAN; Huston, Frank H.; Larrett, Harry.

THE following have been inquired for in either the Aug. 10 or Aug. 30, 1924, issues of Adventure. They can get the name and address of the the inquirer from this magazine.

BARR, JOSEPH L.; Bateman, Leonard; Beames, Joe; Brothen, Carl or Charley; Curts, Frank E.; Davis, Lillian; Dickens, Allan; Eadon, Lionel Alfred; Gaffney, J. E.; Green, John; Knight, John; McDermott, Dr. Gordon; McDonald, James; MacDonald, Fred B.; Matthew, Harry Robbins; Mitchell, Etta; Mitchell, Dr. Gordon; Moore, Anna; Morgan, Walter V.; Ryan, James A.; Sharpe, Cecil; Semple, James Lithow; Tereune, Auguste; Thompson, Myron and Lawrence; Tomb, William; Waddell, William or James.

MISCELLANEOUS—Ike; Will M. L. who has sole copy of poem commencing with "Music and Song and the Rhythmic Dance" write N. D.; Would be glad to hear from any or all of the boys who soldiered with me in Co. K, U. S. Infantry, during war.

THE TRAIL AHEAD

SEPTEMBER 30TH ISSUE

Besides the **three complete novelettes** mentioned on the second contents page of this issue, the next *Adventure* will bring you the following stories:

FRENCH HARP BILL — ***Raymond S. Spears***
He was only a bum in the eyes of the town gambler; and then at last they clashed.

WATER — ***Herman Petersen***
Worth £10,000 a cask to the pearl buyer.

THE PRICE OF FREEDOM — ***James Parker Long***
Only *Padraic* could catch his wolfhounds.

GO-FEVER Part II — ***J. Allan Dunn***
Gold among the Myalls.

THE DECREE OF ALLAH *An Incident in the Affairs of Mohamed Ali* — ***George E. Holt***
"For a thousand years I battered upon the gates."

NUNÉ OF THE *INFANTA CAY* — ***John Dorman***
A wreck, two gamblers and a cat.

HIPÓLITO BUYS A COW — ***Thomas Topham***
—and routs the federal troops.

Still Farther Ahead

THE three issues following the next will contain *long* stories by Talbot Mundy, H. Bedford-Jones, Douglas Oliver, H. C. Bailey, W. C. Tuttle, Bruce Johns, Charles Victor Fischer, Harold Lamb, Walter J. Coburn, and Alvin F. Harlow; and short stories by Lewis H. Kilpatrick, Chester T. Crowell, Gordon Young, William Byron Mowery, Georges Surdez, Barry Scobee, Warren H. Miller, J. H. Greene and F. St. Mars; stories of secret service in India, dispatch-runners on the Western Front, knights-at-arms in medieval France, gold-seekers in California, sheriffs in the mountain country, gun-runners in Mexico, gobs on the Pacific, cowboys on the Western ranges, John Paul Jones in Russia, plague-fighters among the Malays, adventurers the world around.

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While He looked for a Pen that would Write

The Other Man changed his Mind

How a $25,000 deal was lost!

—yes, it really happened, and a Parker Duofold would have saved the day

THE MAN who lost the transaction supplied us with the facts:

"The buyer," he said, "had accepted my proposition and was ready to sign up. But I had to step out of the room in search of a pen that would write. While I was gone, the other man changed his mind. And the deal—a $25,000 transaction—was off! Never again will I get caught without a sure-fire pen in my pocket."

Every day new situations arise when the unerring Duofold Pen is worth its weight in gold! When this hand-balanced, rapid, jewel-smooth writer beats the clock to the finish—to close a deal, pass a test, or catch the last mail. And it gives one's penmanship the speed and character that win with the world.

Duofold's Over-size Barrel holds that extra ration of ink that can save the day in a crisis; and the "Lucky Curve" Feed—Geo. S. Parker's creation—delivers the ink with sure-fire certainty.

Notwithstanding that Duofold is the classic of pens, it's the most economical ever known. For its point—if not mistreated—is guaranteed for 25 years' WEAR—not merely for mechanical perfection. What is $7 compared to results like these?

Better replace your old pen with a Duofold—it puts you on even terms with the best of them. Wherever this black-tipped lacquer-red beauty is seen its owner is esteemed. And its color makes it hard to lose.

Any good pen counter will sell you a Parker Duofold on 30 days' approval. Step in and get the Duofold now—you can never tell until too late what delay may cost you.

Red and Black Color Combination Reg. Trade Mark U. S. Pat. Office

THE PARKER PEN COMPANY · JANESVILLE, WISCONSIN

NEW YORK, CHICAGO · *Parker Duofold Pencils match the Duofold Pen*, $3.50 · SAN FRANCISCO, SPOKANE

THE PARKER FOUNTAIN PEN COMPANY, LTD., TORONTO, CANADA

Parker Duofold

LUCKY CURVE

OVER-SIZE

$7

With The 25 Year Point

Duofold Jr. $5
Same except for size

Lady Duofold $5
With ring for chatelaine

CAUTION

No pen but Parker Duofold has the 25-year Duofold point; the Duo-Sleeve Cap—an extra sleeve for an Ink-Tight seal; the "Lucky Curve" Feed; or the Press-Button Filler, capped inside the barrel—out of sight—out of harm's way. So look for this stamp on the barrel—"Geo. S. Parker—DUOFOLD—Lucky Curve." Then imitations can't deceive you.

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She was a terrible old woman—

BAD

and proud of it

!

HER only weak spot was her daughter. And when the girl came home one night and told her mother that she wanted to marry a reformed crook, *Mama Peretieux* decided to stop the marriage by fair means or foul. Will she ruin her daughter's life by framing her lover? You will want to read this dramatic story of the underworld of Paris by Oscar Schisgall in

Stories by

J. C. SNAITH
NORMAN REILLY RAINE
HENRY FRANCIS GRANGER
MICHAEL J. PHILLIPS
GEORGE KIBBE TURNER
ARTHUR MILLS
WILLIAM UPSOM

Also in September Everybody's

Everybody's Magazine FOR SEPTEMBER

First in Fiction *On every news-stand*

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